World's

Great Detective

Stories

E X L I B R I S

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Mr. Vincent Cawdor, Commission Agent

For the second time since their new association, Peter Ruff had surprised that look upon his secretary's face. This time he wheeled around in his chair and addressed her.

"My dear Violet," he said, "be frank with me. What is wrong?"

Miss Brown turned to face her employer. Save for a greater demureness of expression and the extreme simplicity of her attire, she had changed very little since she had given up her life of comparative luxury to become Peter Ruff's secretary. There was a sort of personal elegance which clung to her, notwithstanding her strenuous attempts to dress for her part, except for which she looked precisely how a private secretary and typist should look.

"I have not complained, have I?" she asked.

"Do not waste time," Peter Ruff said, coldly. "Proceed."

"I have not enough to do," she said. "I do not understand why you refuse so many cases."

Peter Ruff nodded.

"I did not bring my talents into this business," he said, "to watch flirting wives, to ascertain the haunts of gay husbands, or to detect the pilferings of servants."

"Anything is better than sitting still," she protested.

"I do not agree with you," Peter Ruff said. "I like sitting still very much indeed—one has time to think. Is there anything else?"

"Shall I really go on?" she asked.

"By all means," he answered.

"I have an idea," she continued, "that you are subordinating your general interests to your secret enmity—to one man. You are waiting until you can find another case in which you are pitted against him."

"Sometimes," Peter Ruff said, "your intelligence surprises me!"

"I came to you," she continued, looking at him earnestly, "for two reasons. The personal one I will not touch upon. The other was my love of excitement. I have tried many things in life, as you know, Peter, but I have seemed to carry always with me the heritage of weariness. I thought that my position here would help me to fight against it."

"You have seen me bring a corpse to life," Peter Ruff reminded her, a little aggrieved.

She smiled.

"It was a month ago," she reminded him.

"I can't do that sort of thing every day," he declared.

"Naturally," she answered; "but you have refused four cases within the last five days."

By permission of the author, E. Phillips Oppenheim.

Peter Ruff whistled softly to himself for several moments.

"Seen anything of our new neighbor in the flat above?" he asked, with apparent irrelevance.

Miss Brown looked across at him with upraised eyebrows.

"I have been in the lift with him twice," she answered.

"Fancy his appearance?" Ruff asked, casually.

"Not in the least!" Violet answered. "I thought him a vulgar, offensive person!"

Peter Ruff chuckled. He seemed immensely delighted.

"Mr. Vincent Cawdor he calls himself, I believe," he remarked.

"I have no idea," Miss Brown declared. The subject did not appeal to her.

"His name is on a small copper plate just above the letter-box," Ruff said. "He calls himself a commission agent, I believe."

Violet was suddenly interested. She realized, after all, that Mr. Vincent Cawdor might be a person of some importance.

"What is a commission agent?" she asked.

Peter Ruff shook his head.

"It might mean anything," he declared. "Never trust anyone who is not a little more explicit as to his profession. I am afraid that this Mr. Vincent Cawdor, for instance, is a bad lot."

"I am sure he is," Miss Brown declared.

"Looks after a pretty girl, coughs in the lift—all that sort of thing, eh?" Peter Ruff asked.

She nodded.

"Disgusting!" she exclaimed, with emphasis.

Peter Ruff sighed, and glanced at the clock. The existence of Mr. Vincent Cawdor seemed to pass out of his mind.

"It is nearly one o'clock," he said. "Where do you usually lunch, Violet?"

"It depends upon my appetite," she answered, carelessly. "Most often at an A B C."

"Today," Peter Ruff said, "you will be extravagant, at my expense."

"I had a poor breakfast," Miss Brown remarked, complacently.

"You will leave at once," Peter Ruff said, "and you will go to the French Café at the *Milan*. Get a table facing the courtyard, and towards the hotel side of the room. Keep your eyes open and tell me exactly what you see."

She looked at him with parted lips. Her eyes were full of eager questioning.

"Mere skirmishing," Peter Ruff continued, "but I think—yes, I think that it may lead to something!"

"Whom am I to watch?" she asked.

"Anyone who looks interesting." Peter Ruff answered. "For instance, if this person Vincent Cawdor should be about."

"He would recognize me!" she declared.

Peter Ruff shrugged his shoulders.

"One must hold the candle," he remarked.

"I decline to flirt with him," she declared. "Nothing would induce me to be pleasant to such an odious creature."

"He will be too busy to attempt anything of the sort," Peter Ruff declared. "Of course he may not be there. It

may be the merest fancy on my part. At any rate, you may rely upon it that he will not make any overtures in a public place like the *Milan*. Mr. Vincent Cawdor may be a curious sort of person, but I do not fancy that he is a fool!"

"Very well," Miss Brown said, "I will go."

"Be back soon after three," Peter Ruff said. "I am going up to my room to do my exercises."

"And afterwards?" she asked.

"I shall have my lunch sent in," he answered. "Don't hurry back, though I shall not expect you till a quarter past three."

It was a few minutes past that time when Miss Brown returned. Peter Ruff was sitting at his desk looking as though he had never moved. He was absorbed by a book of patterns sent in by his new tailor, and he only glanced up at her entrance.

"Violet," he said, earnestly, "come in and sit down. I want to consult you. There is a new material here. I wonder whether it would suit me?"

Violet was looking very handsome and a little flushed. She came over to his side.

"Put that stupid book away, Peter," she said. "I want to tell you about the *Milan*."

He leaned back in his chair.

"Ah!" he said. "I had forgotten! Was Mr. Vincent Cawdor there?"

"Yes!" she answered, still a little breathless. "There was some one else there, too, in whom you are still more interested."

He nodded.

"Go on," he said.

"Mr. Vincent Cawdor," she continued, "came in alone. He looked just as objectionable as ever, and he stared at me till I nearly threw something at him."

"He did not speak to you?" Peter Ruff asked.

"I was afraid that he was going to," Miss Brown said, "but fortunately he met a friend who came to his table and lunched with him."

"A friend," Ruff remarked. "Good! What was he like?"

"Fair, slight, Teutonic," Miss Brown answered. "He wore thick spectacles, and his mustache was positively yellow."

Ruff nodded.

"Go on," he said.

"Towards the end of luncheon," she continued, "an American came up to them."

"An American?" Peter Ruff interrupted. "How do you know that?"

Miss Brown smiled.

"He was clean-shaven and he wore neat clothes," she said. "He talked with an accent you could have cut with a knife. After luncheon, they all three went away to the smoking room."

Peter Ruff nodded.

"Anything else?" he asked.

The girl smiled triumphantly.

"Yes!" she declared. "There was something else — something which I think you will find interesting. At the next table to me there was a man — alone. Can you guess who it was?"

"John Dory," Ruff said, calmly.

The girl was disappointed.

"You knew!" she exclaimed.

"My dear Violet," he said, "I did not send you there on a fool's errand."

"There is something doing, then?" she exclaimed.

"There is likely," he answered, grimly, "to be a great deal doing!"

The two men who stood upon the hill and Peter Ruff, who lay upon his stomach behind a huge boulder looked upon a new thing.

Far down in the valley from out of a black shed—the only sign of man's handiwork for many miles—it came—something gray at first, moving slowly, as though being pushed down a slight incline, then afloat in the air, gathering speed—something between a torpedo with wings and a great prehistoric insect. Now and then it described strange circles, but mostly it came towards them as swift and true as an arrow shot from a bow. The two men looked at one another—the shorter, to whose cheeks the Cumberland winds had brought no trace of color, gave vent to a hoarse exclamation.

"He's done it!" he growled.

"Wait!" the other answered.

Over their heads the thing wheeled, and seemed to stand still in the air. The beating of the engine was so faint that Peter Ruff, from behind the boulder, could hear all that was said. A man leaned out from his seat—a man with wan cheeks but blazing eyes.

"Is it enough?" he asked, hoarsely.

"It is enough!" the two men answered together. "We will come down."

The youth touched a lever and the machine glided down towards the valley, falling all the while with the effortless grace of a parachute. The shed from which his machine had issued was midway down a slope. The machine seemed to hover for several moments above the building, then descended slowly on to the rails and disappeared in the shed. The two men were already halfway down the hill. Peter Ruff rose from behind the boulder, stretched himself with a sense of immense relief, and lit a pipe. As yet he dared not descend. He simply changed his hiding place for a spot which enabled him to command a view of the handful of cottages at the back of the hill. He had plenty to think about.

The youth, meanwhile, was drinking deep of the poisonous cup. He walked between the two men—his cheeks were flushed, his eyes were on fire.

"Mine is the ideal principle," the youth declared. "No one else has thought of it yet, no one else has made use of it. Yet all the time I am afraid—it is so simple."

"Sell quick, then," the fair-headed man advised. "By tomorrow night I can promise you fifty thousand pounds."

The youth stopped. He drew a deep breath.

"I shall sell," he declared, "I need money. I want to live. Fifty thousand pounds is enough. Eleven weary months I have slept and toiled there in the shed."

"It is finished," the older man declared. "Tonight you shall come with us to London. Tomorrow night your pockets will be full of gold. It will be a change for you."

The youth sobbed.

"God knows it will," he muttered,

"I haven't two shillings in the world, and I owe for my last petrol."

The two men laughed heartily. The elder took a little bundle of notes from his pocket and handed them to the boy.

"Come," he said, "not for another moment shall you feel as poor as that. Money will have no value for you in the future. The fifty thousand pounds will only be a start. After that, you will get royalties. If I had it, I would give you a quarter of a million for your plans, I know that I can get you more."

The youth laughed hysterically. They entered the tiny inn and drank home-made wine—the best they could get. Then a great car drew up outside, and the older—the clean-shaven man, who looked like an American—hurried out, and dragging a hamper from beneath the seat returned with a gold-foiled bottle in his hand.

"Come," he said, "a toast! We have one bottle left—one bottle of the best!"

"Champagne!" the youth cried eagerly, holding out his hand.

"The only wine for the conquerors," the other declared, pouring it out into the thick tumblers. "Drink, all of you, to the Franklin Flying Machine, to the millions she will earn—to tomorrow night!"

The youth drained his glass, watched it replenished, and drained it again. Then they went out to the car.

"There is one thing yet to be done," he said. "Wait here for me."

They waited whilst he climbed up toward the shed. The two men watched him. Then there was a little shout. From above their heads came the sound of a great explosion—red flames were leaping up from that black barn to the sky. The two men looked at one another. They rushed to the hill and met the youth descending.

"What the—"

He stopped them.

"I dared not leave it here," he explained. "It would have been madness. I am perfectly certain that I have been watched even during the last few days. I can build another in a week. I have the plans in my pocket for every part."

The older man wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"You are sure—that you have the plans?" he asked.

The youth struck himself on the chest.

"They are here," he answered, "every one of them."

"Perhaps you are right, then," the other man answered. "It gave me a turn though. You are sure that you can make it again in the time you say?"

"Of course!" the youth answered, impatiently. "Besides, the thing is so simple. It speaks for itself."

They climbed into the car, and in a few minutes were rushing away southwards.

"Tomorrow night—tomorrow night it all begins!" the youth continued. "I must start with ready-made clothes. I'll get the best I can, eat the best I can, drink wine, go to the music-halls. Tomorrow night—"

His speech ended in a wail—a strange, half-stifled cry which rang out with a chill, ghostly sound upon the black silence. His face was covered with a wet towel, a ghastly odor was in his nostrils, his lips refused to utter any further sound. He lay back

amongst the cushions, senseless. The car slowed down.

"Get the papers, quick!" the elder man muttered, opening the boy's coat. "Here they are! Catch hold, Dick! My God! What's that?"

He shook from head to foot. The little fair man looked at him with contempt.

"A sheep bell on the moor," he said. "Are you sure you have everything?"

"Yes," the other muttered.

They both stood up and raised the prostrate form between them. Below them were the black waters of the lake.

"Over with him!" the younger said. "Quick!"

Once more his companion shrank away.

"Listen!" he muttered hoarsely.

They both held their breaths. From somewhere along the road behind came a faint sound like the beating of an engine.

"It's a car!" the elder man exclaimed. "Quick! Over with him!"

They lifted the body of the boy, whose lips were white and speechless now, and threw him into the water. With a great splash he disappeared. They watched for a moment. Only the ripples flowed away from the place where he had sunk. They jumped back to their seats.

"There's something close behind," the older man muttered. "Get on! Fast! Fast!"

The younger man hesitated.

"Perhaps," he said slowly, "it would be better to wait and see who is coming up behind. Our young friend there is safe. The current has him, and the tarn is bottomless."

There was a moment's indecision—a moment which was to count for much in the lives of three men. Then the elder one's counsels prevailed. They crept away down the hill, smoothly and noiselessly. Behind them, the faint throbbing grew less and less distinct. Soon they heard it no more. They drove into the dawn and through the long day.

Side by side on one of the big leather couches in the small smoking-room of the *Milan* Hotel, Mr. James P. Rounceby and his friend, Mr. Richard Marnstam, sat whispering together. It was nearly two o'clock, and they were alone in the room. Some of the lights had been turned out. The roar of life in the streets without had ceased. It was an uneasy hour for those whose consciences were not wholly at rest!

The two men were in evening dress —Rounceby in dinner coat and black tie, as befitted his role of traveling American. The glasses in front of them were only half-filled, and had remained so for the last hour. Their conversation had been nervous and spasmodic. It was obvious that they were waiting for some one.

Three o'clock struck by the little timepiece on the mantel shelf. A little exclamation of a profane nature broke from Rounceby's lips. He leaned toward his companion.

"Say," he muttered, in a rather thick undertone, "how about this fellow Vincent Cawdor. You haven't any doubts about him, I suppose? He's on the square, all right, eh?"

Marnstam wet his lips nervously.

"Cawdor's all right," he said. "I had

it direct from headquarters at Paris. What are you uneasy about, eh?"

Rounceby pointed towards the clock.

"Do you see the time?" he asked.

"He said he'd be late," Marnstam answered.

Rounceby put his hand to his forehead and found it moist.

"It's been a silly game, all along," he muttered. "We'd better have brought the young ass up here and jostled him."

"Not so easy," Marnstam answered. "These young fools have a way of turning obstinate. He'd have chucked us, sure. Anyhow, he's safer where he is."

They relapsed once more into silence. A storm of rain beat upon the window. Rounceby glanced up. It was as black out there as were the waters of that silent tarn! The man shivered as the thought struck him. Marnstam, who had no nerves, twirled his gold mustache and watched his companion with wonder.

"You look as though you saw a ghost," he remarked.

"Perhaps I do!" Rounceby growled.

"You had better finish your drink, my dear fellow," Marnstam advised. "Afterwards—"

Suddenly he stiffened into attention. He laid his hand upon his companion's knee.

"Listen!" he said. "There is some one coming."

They leaned a little forward. The swing doors were opened. A girl's musical laugh rang out from the corridor. Tall and elegant, her left hand resting upon the shoulder of the man into whose ear she was whispering, and whom she led straight to one of the writing tables, Miss Violet Brown swept into the room. On her right, and nearest to the men, was Mr. Vincent Cawdor.

"Now you can go and talk to your friends!" she exclaimed, lightly. "I am going to make Victor listen to me."

Cawdor left his two companions and sank onto the couch by Rounceby's side. The young man, with his opera hat still on his head, and the light overcoat which he had been carrying by his side, was seated before the writing table with his back to them. Miss Brown was leaning over him, with her hand upon the back of his chair. They were out of hearing of the other three men.

"Well, Rounceby, my friend," Mr. Vincent Cawdor remarked, cheerfully, "you're having a late sitting, eh?"

"We've been waiting for you, you fool!" Rounceby answered. "What on earth are you thinking about, bringing a crowd like this about with you, eh?"

Cawdor smiled, reassuringly.

"Don't you worry," he said, in a lower tone. "I know my way in and out of the ropes here better than you can teach me. A big hotel like this is the safest and the most dangerous place in the world—just how you choose to make it. You've got to bluff 'em all the time. That's why I brought the young lady—particular friend of mine—real nice girl, too!"

"And the young man?" Rounceby asked, suspiciously.

Cawdor grew more serious.

"That's Captain Lowther," he said softly—"private secretary to Colonel Dean, who's the chief of the aeronaut department at Aldershot. He has a draft in his pocket for twenty thousand

pounds. It is yours if he is satisfied with the plans."

"Twenty thousand pounds!" Marnstam said, thoughtfully. "It is very little—very little indeed for the risks we have run!"

Cawdor moved his place and sat between the two men. He laid a hand on Marnstam's shoulder—another on Rounceby's knee.

"My dear friends," he said, impressively, "if you could have built a model, or conducted these negotiations in the usual way, you might have asked a million. As it is, I think I am the only man in England who could have dealt with this matter—so satisfactorily."

Rounceby glanced suspiciously at the young man to whom Miss Brown was still devoting the whole of her attention.

"Why don't he come out and talk like a man?" he asked. "What's the idea of his sitting over there with his back to us?"

"I want him never to see your faces—to deal only with me," Cawdor explained. "Remember that he is in an official position. The money he is going to part with is secret service money."

The two men were beginning to be more reassured. Rounceby slowly produced a roll of oilskin from his pocket.

"He'll look at them as he sits there," he insisted. "There must be no copying or making notes, mind."

Cawdor smiled in a superior fashion.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you are dealing with the emissary of a government—not one of your own sort."

Rounceby glanced at his companions, who nodded. Then he handed over the plans.

"Tell him to look sharp," he said. "It's not so late but that there may be people in here yet."

Cawdor crossed the room with the plans, and laid them down before the writing table. Rounceby rose to his feet and lit a cigar. Marnstam walked to the further window and back again. They stood side by side. Rounceby's whole frame seemed to have stiffened with some new emotion.

"There's something wrong, Jim," Marnstam whispered softly in his ear. "You've got the old lady in your pocket?"

"Yes!" Rounceby answered thickly, "and, by heavens, I'm going to use it!"

"Don't shoot unless it's the worst," Marnstam counseled. "I shall go out of that window, into the tree, and run for the river. But bluff first, Jim—bluff for your life!'

There were swing doors leading into the room from the hotel side, and a small door exactly opposite which led to the residential part of the place. Both of these doors were opened at precisely the same moment. Through the former stepped two strong-looking men in long overcoats, and with the unmistakable appearance of policemen in plain clothes. Through the latter came John Dory! He walked straight up to the two men. It spoke volumes for his courage that, knowing their characters and believing them to be in desperate straits, he came unarmed.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I hold warrants for your arrest. I will not trouble you with your aliases. You are known today, I believe, as James Rounceby and

Richard Marnstam. Will you come quietly?"

Marnstam's expression was one of bland and beautiful surprise.

"My dear sir," he said, edging, however, a little toward the window—"you must be joking! What is the charge?"

"You are charged with the wilful murder of a young man named Victor Franklin," John Dory answered. "His body was recovered from Longthorp Tarn this afternoon. You had better say nothing. Also with the theft of certain papers known to have been in his possession."

Now it is possible that at this precise moment Marnstam would have made his spring for the window and Rounceby his running fight for liberty. The hands of both men were upon their revolvers, and John Dory's life was a thing of no account. But at this juncture a thing happened. There were in the room the two policemen guarding the swing doors, and behind them the pale faces of a couple of night porters looking anxiously in. Vincent Cawdor and Miss Brown were standing side by side, a little in the background, and the young man who had been their companion had risen also to his feet. As though with some intention of intervening, he moved a step forward, almost in line with Dory. Rounceby saw him, and a new fear gripped him by the heart. He shrank back, his fingers relaxed their hold of his weapon, the sweat was hot upon his forehead. Marnstam, though he seemed for a moment stupefied, realized the miracle which had happened and struck boldly for his own.

"If this is a joke," he said, "it strikes me as being a particularly bad one. I should like to know, sir, how you dare to come into this room and charge me and my friend—Mr. Rounceby—with being concerned in the murder of a young man who is even now actually standing by your side."

John Dory started back. He looked with something like apprehension at the youth to whom Marnstam pointed.

"My name is Victor Franklin," that young man declared. "What's all this about?"

John Dory felt the ground give beneath his feet. Nevertheless, he set his teeth and fought for his hand.

"You say that your name is Victor Franklin?" he asked.

"Certainly!"

"You are the inventor of a flying machine?"

"I am."

"You were in Westmoreland with these two men a few days ago?"

"I was," the young man admitted.

"You left the village of Scawton in a motor car with them?"

"Yes! We quarrelled on the way, and parted."

"You were robbed of nothing?"

Victor Franklin smiled.

"Certainly not," he answered. "I had nothing worth stealing except my plans, and they are in my pocket now."

There was a few moments' intense silence. John Dory wheeled suddenly round, and looked to where Mr. Vincent Cawdor had been standing.

"Where is Mr. Cawdor?" he asked, sharply.

"The gentleman with the gray mustache left a few seconds ago," one of the men at the door said.

John Dory was very pale.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have to offer you my apologies. I have apparently been deceived by some false information. The charge is withdrawn."

He turned on his heel and left the room. The two policemen followed him.

"Keep them under observation," Dory ordered shortly, "but I am afraid this fellow Cawdor has sold me."

He found a cab outside, and sprang into it.

"Number 27, Southampton Row," he ordered.

Rounceby and his partner were alone in the little smoking-room. The former was almost inarticulate. The night porter brought them brandy, and both men drank.

"We've got to get to the bottom of this, Marnstam," Mr. J. Rounceby muttered.

Mr. Marnstam was thinking.

"Do you remember that sound through the darkness," he said—"the beating of an engine way back on the road?"

"What of it?" Rounceby demanded.

"It was a motorcycle," Marnstam said quietly. "I thought so at the time."

"Supposing some one followed us and pulled him out," Rounceby said, hoarsely, "why are we treated like this? I tell you we've been made fools of! We've been treated like children—not even to be punished! We'll have the truth somehow out of that devil Cawdor! Come!"

They made their way to the courtyard and found a cab.

"Number 27, Southampton Row!" they ordered.

They reached their destination some time before Dory. They ascended to the fourth floor of the building and rang the bell of Vincent Cawdor's room—no answer. They plied the knocker—no result. Rounceby peered through the keyhole.

"He hasn't come home yet," he remarked. "There is no light in the place."

The door of a flat across the passage was quietly opened. Mr. Peter Ruff, in a neat black smoking jacket and slippers, and holding a pipe in his hand, looked out.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," he said, "but I do not think Mr. Cawdor is in. He went out early this evening, and I have not heard him return."

The two men turned away.

"We are much obliged to you, sir," Mr. Marnstam said.

"Can I give him any message?" Peter Ruff asked, politely. "We generally see something of one another in the morning."

"You can tell him—," Rounceby began.

"No message, thanks!" Marnstam interrupted. "We shall probably run across him ourselves tomorrow."

John Dory was nearly a quarter of an hour late. After his third useless summons, Mr. Peter Ruff presented himself again.

"I am afraid," he said, "you will not find my neighbor at home. There have been several people inquiring for him tonight, without any result."

John Dory came slowly across the landing.

"Good evening, Mr. Ruff!" he said.

"Why. it's Mr. Dory!" Peter Ruff declared, "Come in, do, and have a drink."

John Dory accepted the invitation, and his eyes were busy in that little sitting-room during the few minutes which it took his host to mix a whiskey and soda.

"Nothing wrong with our friend opposite, I hope?" Peter Ruff asked, jerking his head across the landing.

"I hope not, Mr. Ruff," John Dory said. "No doubt in the morning he will be able to explain everything. I must say that I should like to see him tonight, though."

"He may turn up yet," Peter Ruff remarked, cheerfully. "He's like myself—a late bird."

"I fear not," Dory answered, drily. "Nice rooms you have here, sir. Just a sitting-room and a bedroom, eh?"

Peter Ruff stood up and threw open the door of the inner apartment.

The detective did look round, and pretty thoroughly. As soon as he was sure that there was no one concealed upon the premises, he drank his whisky and soda and went.

"I'll look in again to see Cawdor," he remarked—"tomorrow, perhaps, or the next day."

"I'll let him know if I see him about," Peter Ruff declared. "Sorry the lift's stopped. Three steps to the left and straight on. Good-night!"

Miss Brown arrived early the following morning, and was disposed to be inquisitive.

"I should like to know," she said, "exactly what has become of Mr. Vincent Cawdor."

"My dear Violet," Peter Ruff answered, "there is no man in the world today who is my equal in the art of disguising himself. At the same time, I wanted to know whether I could deceive you. I wanted to be quite sure that my study of Mr. Vincent Cawdor was a safe one. I took those rooms in his name and in his own person. I do not think that it occurred even to our friend John Dory to connect us in his mind."

"Very well," she went on. "Now tell me, please, what took you up to Westmoreland?"

"I followed Rounceby and Marnstam," he answered. "I knew them when I was abroad, studying crime—I could tell you a good deal about both those men if it were worth while—and I knew, when they hired a big motor car and engaged a crook to drive it that they were worth following. I saw the trial of the flying machine, and when they started off with young Franklin, I followed on a motorcycle. I fished him out of the tarn where they left him for dead, brought him on to London, and made my own terms with him."

"What about the body which was found in the Longthorp Tarn?" she asked.

"I had that telegram sent myself," Peter Ruff answered.

She looked at him severely.

"You went out of your way to make a fool of John Dory!" she said, frowning at him.

"That I admit," he answered.

"It seems to me," she continued,

"that that, after all, has been the chief object in the whole affair. I do not see that we—that is the firm—profit in the least."

Peter Ruff chuckled.

"We've got a fourth share in the Franklin Flying Machine," he answered, "and I'm hanged if I'd sell it for a hundred thousand pounds."

"You've taken advantage of that young man's gratitude," she declared.

Peter Ruff shook his head.

"I earned the money," he answered.

Missing: Page Thirteen

"One more! just one more well-paying affair, and I promise to stop; really and truly to stop."

"But, Puss, why one more? You have earned the amount you set for yourself,—or very nearly,—and though my help is not great, in three months I can add enough—"

"No, you cannot, Arthur. You are doing well; I appreciate it; in fact, I am just delighted to have you work for me in the way you do, but you cannot, in your position, make enough in three months, or in six, to meet the situation as I see it. Enough does not satisfy me. The measure must be full, heaped up, and running over. Possible failure following promise must be provided for. Never must I feel myself called upon to do this kind of thing again. Besides, I have never got over the Zabriskie tragedy. It haunts me continually. Something new may help to put it out of my head. I feel guilty. I was responsible—"

"No, Puss. I will not have it that you were responsible. Some such end was bound to follow a complication like that. Sooner or later he would have been driven to shoot himself—"

"But not her."

"No, not her. But do you think she would have given those few minutes of perfect understanding with her blind husband for a few years more of miserable life?"

Violet made no answer; she was too absorbed in her surprise. Was this Arthur? Had a few weeks' work and a close connection with the really serious things of life made this change in him? Her face beamed at the thought, which seeing, but not understanding what underlay this evidence of joy, he bent and kissed her, saying with some of his old nonchalance:

"Forget it, Violet; only don't let anyone or anything lead you to interest yourself in another affair of the kind. If you do, I shall have to consult a certain friend of yours as to the best way of stopping this folly. I mention no names. Oh! you need not look so frightened. Only behave; that's all."

"He's right," she acknowledged to herself, as he sauntered away; "altogether right."

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Yet because she wanted the extra money—

* * * * *

The scene invited alarm,—that is, for so young a girl as Violet, surveying it from an automobile some time after the stroke of midnight. An unknown house at the end of a heavily shaded walk, in the open doorway of which could be seen the silhouette of a woman's form leaning eagerly forward with arms outstretched in an appeal for help! It vanished while she looked, but the effect remained, holding her to her seat for one startled moment. This seemed strange, for she had anticipated adventure. One is not summoned from a private ball to ride a dozen miles into the country on an errand of investigation, without some expectation of encountering the mysterious and the tragic. But Violet Strange, for all her many experiences, was of a most susceptible nature, and for the instant in which that door stood open, with only the memory of that expectant figure to disturb the faintly lit vista of the hall beyond, she felt that grip upon the throat which comes from an indefinable fear which no words can explain and no plummet sound.

But this soon passed. With the setting of her foot to ground, conditions changed and her emotions took on a more normal character. The figure of a man now stood in the place held by the vanished woman, and it was not only that of one she knew but that of one whom she trusted—a friend whose very presence gave her courage. With this recognition came a better understanding of the situation, and it was with a beaming eye and unclouded features that she tripped up the walk to meet the expectant figure and outstretched hand of Roger Upjohn.

"You here!" she exclaimed, amid smiles and blushes, as he drew her into the hall.

He at once launched forth into explanations mingled with apologies for the presumption he had shown in putting her to this inconvenience. There was trouble in the house—great trouble. Something had occurred for which an explanation must be found before morning, or the happiness and honour of more than one person now under this unhappy roof would be wrecked. He knew it was late—that she had been obliged to take a long and dreary ride alone, but her success with the problem which had once come near wrecking his own life had emboldened him to telephone to the office and— "But you are in ball-dress," he cried in amazement. "Did you think—"

"I came from a ball. Word reached me between the dances. I did not go home. I had been bidden to hurry."

He looked his appreciation, but when he spoke it was to say:

"This is the situation. Miss Digby—"

"The lady who is to be married to-morrow?"

"Who *hopes* to be married to-morrow?"

"How, *hopes?*"

"Who *will* be married to-morrow, if a certain article lost in this house to-night can be found before any of the persons who have been dining here leave for their homes."

Violet uttered an exclamation.

"Then, Mr. Cornell—" she began.

"Mr. Cornell has our utmost confi-

dence," Roger hastened to interpose. "But the article missing is one which he might reasonably desire to possess and which he alone of all present had the opportunity of securing. You can therefore see why he, with his pride—the pride of a man not rich, engaged to marry a woman who is—should declare that unless his innocence is established before daybreak, the doors of St. Bartholomew will remain shut to-morrow."

"But the article lost—what is it?"

"Miss Digby will give you the particulars. She is waiting to receive you," he added with a gesture towards a half-open door at their right.

Violet glanced that way, then cast her looks up and down the hall in which they stood.

"Do you know that you have not told me in whose house I am? Not hers, I know. She lives in the city."

"And you are twelve miles from Harlem. Miss Strange, you are in the Van Broecklyn mansion, famous enough you will acknowledge. Have you never been here before?"

"I have been by here, but I recognized nothing in the dark. What an exciting place for an investigation!"

"And Mr. Van Broecklyn? Have you never met him?"

"Once, when a child. He frightened me *then*."

"And may frighten you now; though I doubt it. Time has mellowed him. Besides, I have prepared him for what might otherwise occasion him some astonishment. Naturally he would not look for just the sort of lady investigator I am about to introduce to him."

She smiled. Violet Strange was a very charming young woman, as well as a keen prober of odd mysteries.

The meeting between herself and Miss Digby was a sympathetic one. After the first inevitable shock which the latter felt at sight of the beauty and fashionable appearance of the mysterious little being who was to solve her difficulties, her glance, which under other circumstances might have lingered unduly upon the piquant features and exquisite dressing of the fairy-like figure before her, passed at once to Violet's eyes in whose steady depths beamed an intelligence quite at odds with the coquettish dimples which so often misled the casual observer in his estimation of a character singularly subtle and well poised.

As for the impression she herself made upon Violet—it was the same she made upon everyone. No one could look long at Florence Digby and not recognize the loftiness of her spirit and the generous nature of her impulses. In person she was tall, and as she leaned to take Violet's hand, the difference between them brought out the salient points in each, to the great admiration of the one onlooker.

Meantime for all her interest in the case in hand, Violet could not help casting a hurried look about her, in gratification of the curiosity incited by her entrance into a house signalized from its foundation by such a series of tragic events. The result was disappointing. The walls were plain, the furniture simple. Nothing suggestive in either, unless it was the fact that nothing was new, nothing modern. As it looked in the days of Burr and Hamilton so it looked to-day, even to the rather start-

ling detail of candles which did duty on every side in place of gas.

As Violet recalled the reason for this the fascination of the past seized upon her imagination. There was no knowing where this might have carried her, had not the feverish gleam in Miss Digby's eyes warned her that the present held its own excitement. Instantly, she was all attention and listening with undivided mind to that lady's disclosures.

They were brief and to the following effect:

The dinner which had brought some half-dozen people together in this house had been given in celebration of her impending marriage. But it was also in a way meant as a compliment to one of the other guests, a Mr. Spielhagen, who, during the week, had succeeded in demonstrating to a few experts the value of a discovery he had made which would transform a great industry.

In speaking of this discovery, Miss Digby did not go into particulars, the whole matter being far beyond her understanding; but in stating its value she openly acknowledged that it was in the line of Mr. Cornell's own work, and one which involved calculations and a formula which, if prematurely disclosed, would invalidate the contract Mr. Spielhagen hoped to make, and thus destroy his present hopes.

Of this formula but two copies existed. One was locked up in a safe-deposit vault in Boston, the other he had brought into the house on his person, and it was the latter which was now missing, it having been abstracted during the evening from a manuscript of sixteen or more sheets, under circumstances which he would now endeavour to relate.

Mr. Van Broecklyn, their host, had in his melancholy life but one interest which could be called at all absorbing. This was for explosives. As a consequence, much of the talk at the dinner-table had been on Mr. Spielhagen's discovery, and the possible changes it might introduce into this especial industry. As these, worked out from a formula kept secret from the trade, could not but affect greatly Mr. Cornell's interests, she found herself listening intently, when Mr. Van Broecklyn, with an apology for his interference, ventured to remark that if Mr. Spielhagen had made a valuable discovery in this line, so had he, and one which he had substantiated by many experiments. It was not a remarkable one, such as Mr. Spielhagen's was, but in his work upon the same, and in the tests which he had been led to make, he had discovered certain instances he would gladly name, which demanded exceptional procedure to be successful. If Mr. Spielhagen's method did not allow for these exceptions, nor make suitable provision for them, then Mr. Spielhagen's method would fail more times than it would succeed. Did it so allow and so provide? It would relieve him greatly to learn that it did.

The answer came quickly. Yes, it did. But later and after some further conversation, Mr. Spielhagen's confidence seemed to wane, and before they left the dinner-table, he openly declared his intention of looking over his manuscript again that very night, in order to be sure that the formula therein contained duly covered all the exceptions mentioned by Mr. Van Broecklyn.

If Mr. Cornell's countenance showed any change at this moment, she for one had not noticed it; but the bitterness with which he remarked upon the other's good fortune in having discovered this formula of whose entire success he had no doubt, was apparent to everybody, and naturally gave point to the circumstances which a short time afterward associated him with the disappearance of the same.

The ladies (there were two others besides herself) having withdrawn in a body to the music-room, the gentlemen all proceeded to the library to smoke. Here, conversation loosed from the one topic which had hitherto engrossed it, was proceeding briskly, when Mr. Spielhagen, with a nervous gesture, impulsively looked about him and said:

"I cannot rest till I have run through my thesis again. Where can I find a quiet spot? I won't be long; I read very rapidly."

It was for Mr. Van Broecklyn to answer, but no word coming from him, every eye turned his way, only to find him sunk in one of those fits of abstraction so well known to his friends, and from which no one who has this strange man's peace of mind at heart ever presumes to rouse him.

What was to be done? These moods of their singular host sometimes lasted half an hour, and Mr. Spielhagen had not the appearance of a man of patience. Indeed he presently gave proof of the great uneasiness he was labouring under, for noticing a door standing ajar on the other side of the room, he remarked to those around him:

"A den! and lighted! Do you see any objection to my shutting myself in there for a few minutes?"

No one venturing to reply, he rose, and giving a slight push to the door, disclosed a small room exquisitely panelled and brightly lighted, but without one article of furniture in it, not even a chair.

"The very place," quoth Mr. Spielhagen, and lifting a light cane-bottomed chair from the many standing about, he carried it inside and shut the door behind him.

Several minutes passed during which the man who had served at table entered with a tray on which were several small glasses evidently containing some choice liqueur. Finding his master fixed in one of his strange moods, he set the tray down and, pointing to one of the glasses, said:

"That is for Mr. Van Broecklyn. It contains his usual quieting powder." And urging the gentlemen to help themselves, he quietly left the room.

Mr. Upjohn lifted the glass nearest him, and Mr. Cornell seemed about to do the same when he suddenly reached forward and catching up one farther off started for the room in whch Mr. Spielhagen had so deliberately secluded himself.

Why he did all this—why, above all things, he should reach across the tray for a glass instead of taking the one under his hand, he can no more explain than why he has followed many another unhappy impulse. Nor did he understand the nervous start given by Mr. Spielhagen at his entrance, or the stare with which that gentleman took the glass from his hand and mechanically drank its contents, till he saw how his

hand had stretched itself across the sheet of paper he was reading, in an open attempt to hide the lines visible between his fingers. Then indeed the intruder flushed and withdrew in great embarrassment, fully conscious of his indiscretion but not deeply disturbed till Mr. Van Broecklyn, suddenly arousing and glancing down at the tray placed very near his hand, remarked in some surprise: "Dobbs seems to have forgotten me." Then indeed, the unfortunate Mr. Cornell realized what he had done. It was the glass intended for his host which he had caught up and carried into the other room—the glass which he had been told contained a drug. Of what folly he had been guilty, and how tame would be any effort at excuse!

Attempting none, he rose and with a hurried glance at Mr. Upjohn who flushed in sympathy at his distress, he crossed to the door he had so lately closed upon Mr. Spielhagen. But feeling his shoulder touched as his hand pressed the knob, he turned to meet the eye of Mr. Van Broecklyn fixed upon him with an expression which utterly confounded him.

"Where are you going?" that gentleman asked. The questioning tone, the severe look, expressive at once of displeasure and astonishment, were most disconcerting, but Mr. Cornell managed to stammer forth:

"Mr. Spielhagen is in here consulting his thesis. When your man brought in the cordial, I was awkward enough to catch up your glass and carry it in to Mr. Spielhagen. He drank it and I—I am anxious to see if it did him any harm."

As he uttered the last word he felt Mr. Van Broecklyn's hand slip from his shoulder, but no word accompanied the action, nor did his host make the least move to follow him into the room.

This was a matter of great regret to him later, as it left him for a moment out of the range of every eye, during which he says he simply stood in a state of shock at seeing Mr. Spielhagen still sitting there, manuscript in hand, but with head fallen forward and eyes closed; dead, asleep or—he hardly knew what; the sight so paralyzed him.

Whether or not this was the exact truth and the whole truth, Mr. Cornell certainly looked very unlike himself as he stepped back into Mr. Van Broecklyn's presence; and he was only partially reassured when that gentleman protested that there was no real harm in the drug, and that Mr. Spielhagen would be all right if left to wake naturally and without shock. However, as his present attitude was one of great discomfort, they decided to carry him back and lay him on the library lounge. But before doing this, Mr. Upjohn drew from his flacid grasp the precious manuscript, and carrying it into the larger room placed it on a remote table, where it remained undisturbed till Mr. Spielhagen, suddenly coming to himself at the end of some fifteen minutes, missed the sheets from his hand, and bounding up, crossed the room to repossess himself of them.

His face, as he lifted them up and rapidly ran through them with ever-accumulating anxiety, told them what they had to expect.

The page containing the formula was gone!

* * * * *

Violet now saw her problem.

CHAPTER II

THERE was no doubt about the loss I have mentioned; all could see that page 13 was not there. In vain a second handling of every sheet, the one so numbered was not to be found. Page 14 met the eye on the top of the pile, and page 12 finished it off at the bottom, but no page 13 in between, or anywhere else.

Where had it vanished, and through whose agency had this misadventure occurred? No one could say, or, at least, no one there made any attempt to do so, though everybody started to look for it.

But where look? The adjoining small room offered no facilities for hiding a cigar-end, much less a square of shining white paper. Bare walls, a bare floor, and a single chair for furniture, comprised all that was to be seen in this direction. Nor could the room in which they then stood be thought to hold it, unless it was on the person of some one of them. Could this be the explanation of the mystery? No man looked his doubts; but Mr. Cornell, possibly divining the general feeling, stepped up to Mr. Van Broecklyn and in a cool voice, but with the red burning hotly on either cheek, said so as to be heard by everyone present:

"I demand to be searched—at once and thoroughly."

A moment's silence, then the common cry:

"We will all be searched."

"Is Mr. Spielhagen sure that the missing page was with the others when he sat down in the adjoining room to read his thesis?" asked their perturbed host.

"Very sure," came the emphatic reply. "Indeed I was just going through the formula itself when I fell asleep."

"You are ready to assert this?"

"I am ready to swear it."

Mr. Cornell repeated his request.

"I demand that you make a thorough search of my person. I must be cleared, and instantly, of every suspicion," he gravely asserted, "or how can I marry Miss Digby to-morrow?"

After that there was no further hesitation. One and all subjected themselves to the ordeal suggested; even Mr. Spielhagen. But this effort was as futile as the rest. The lost page was not found.

What were they to think? What were they to do?

There seemed to be nothing left to do, and yet some further attempt must be made towards the recovery of this important formula. Mr. Cornell's marriage and Mr. Spielhagen's business success both depended upon its being in the latter's hands before six in the morning, when he was engaged to hand it over again to a certain manufacturer sailing for Europe on an early steamer.

Five hours!

Had Mr. Van Broecklyn a suggestion to offer? No, he was as much at sea as the rest.

Simultaneously look crossed look. Blankness was on every face.

"Let us call the ladies," suggested one.

It was done, and however great the tension had been before, it was even greater when Miss Digby stepped upon the scene. But she was not a woman to be shaken from her poise even by a crisis of this importance. When the dilemma had been presented to her and the full situation grasped, she looked first at Mr. Cornell and then at Mr. Spielhagen, and quietly said:

"There is but one explanation possible of this matter. Mr. Spielhagen will excuse me, but he is evidently mistaken in thinking that he saw the lost page among the rest. The condition into which he was thrown by the unaccustomed drug he had drank, made him liable to hallucinations. I have not the least doubt he thought he had been studying the formula at the time he dropped off to sleep. I have every confidence in the gentleman's candour. But so have I in that of Mr. Cornell," she supplemented, with a smile.

An exclamation from Mr. Van Broecklyn and a subdued murmur from all but Mr. Spielhagen testified to the effect of this suggestion, and there is no saying what might have been the result if Mr. Cornell had not hurriedly put in this extraordinary and most unexpected protest:

"Miss Digby has my gratitude," said he, "for a confidence which I hope to prove to be deserved. But I must say this for Mr. Spielhagen. He was correct in stating that he was engaged in looking over his formula when I stepped into his presence with a glass of cordial. If you were not in a position to see the hurried way in which his hand instinctively spread itself over the page he was reading, I was; and if that does not seem conclusive to you, then I feel bound to state that in unconsciously following this movement of his, I plainly saw the number written on the top of the page, and that number was—13."

A loud exclamation, this time from Spielhagen himself, announced his gratitude and corresponding change of attitude toward the speaker.

"Wherever that damned page has gone," he protested, advancing towards Cornell with outstretched hand, "you have nothing to do with its disappearance."

Instantly all constraint fled, and every countenance took on a relieved expression. *But the problem remained.*

Suddenly those very words passed someone's lips, and with their utterance Mr. Upjohn remembered how at an extraordinary crisis in his own life, he had been helped and an equally difficult problem settled, by a little lady secretly attached to a private detective agency. If she could only be found and hurried here before morning, all might yet be well. He would make the effort. Such wild schemes sometimes work. He telephoned to the office and—

Was there anything else Miss Strange would like to know?

CHAPTER III

Miss Strange, thus appealed to, asked where the gentlemen were now.

She was told that they were still all together in the library; the ladies had been sent home.

"Then let us go to them," said Violet, hiding under a smile her great fear that here was an affair which might very

easily spell for her that dismal word, *failure.*

So great was that fear that under all ordinary circumstances she would have had no thought for anything else in the short interim between this stating of the problem and her speedy entrance among the persons involved. But the circumstances of this case were so far from ordinary, or rather let me put it in this way, the setting of the case was so very extraordinary, that she scarcely thought of the problem before her, in her great interest in the house through whose rambling halls she was being so carefully guided. So much that was tragic and heartrending had occurred here. The Van Broecklyn name, the Van Broecklyn history, above all the Van Broecklyn tradition, which made the house unique in the country's annals, all made an appeal to her imagination, and centered her thoughts on what she saw about her. There was a door which no man ever opened—had never opened since Revolutionary times—should she see it? Should she know it if she did see it? Then Mr. Van Broecklyn himself! Just to meet him, under any conditions and in any place, was an event. But to meet him here, under the pall of his own mystery! No wonder she had no words for her companions, or that her thoughts clung to this anticipation in wonder and almost fearsome delight.

His story was a well-known one. A bachelor and a misanthrope, he lived absolutely alone save for a large entourage of servants, all men and elderly ones at that. He never visited. Though he now and then, as on this occasion, entertained certain persons under his roof, he declined every invitation for himself, avoiding even, with equal strictness, all evening amusements of whatever kind, which would detain him in the city after ten at night. Perhaps this was to ensure no break in his rule of life never to sleep out of his own bed. Though he was a man well over fifty he had not spent, according to his own statement, but two nights out of his own bed since his return from Europe in early boyhood, and those were in obedience to a judicial summons which took him to Boston.

This was his main eccentricity, but he had another which is apparent enough from what has already been said. He avoided women. If thrown in with them during his short visits into town, he was invariably polite and at all times companionable, but he never sought them out, nor had gossip, contrary to its usual habit, ever linked his name with one of the sex.

Yet he was a man of more than ordinary attraction. His features were fine and his figure impressive. He might have been the cynosure of all eyes had he chosen to enter crowded drawing-rooms, or even to frequent public assemblages, but having turned his back upon everything of the kind in his youth, he had found it impossible to alter his habits with advancing years; nor was he now expected to. The position he had taken was respected. Leonard Van Broecklyn was no longer criticized.

Was there any explanation for this strangely self-centered life? Those who knew him best seemed to think so. In the first place he had sprung from an unfortunate stock. Events of an un-

usual and tragic nature had marked the family of both parents. Nor had his parents themselves been exempt from this seeming fatality. Antagonistic in tastes and temperament, they had dragged on an unhappy existence in the old home, till both natures rebelled, and a separation ensued which not only disunited their lives but sent them to opposite sides of the globe never to return again. At least, that was the inference drawn from the peculiar circumstances attending the event. On the morning of one never-to-be-forgotten day, John Van Broecklyn, the grandfather of the present representative of the family, found the following note from his son lying on the library table:

"FATHER:

"Life in this house, or any house, with *her* is no longer endurable. One of us must go. The mother should not be separated from her child. Therefore it is I whom you will never see again. Forget me, but be considerate of her and the boy.

"WILLIAM."

Six hours later another note was found, this time from the wife:

"FATHER:

"Tied to a rotting corpse what does one do? Lop off one's arm if necessary to rid one of the contact. As all love between your son and myself is dead, I can no longer live within the sound of his voice. As this is his home, he is the one to remain in it. May our child reap the benefit of his mother's loss and his father's affection.

"RHODA."

Both were gone, and gone forever. Simultaneous in their departure, they preserved each his own silence and sent no word back. If the one went East and the other West, they may have met on the other side of the globe, but never again in the home which sheltered their boy. For him and for his grandfather they had sunk from sight in the great sea of humanity, leaving them stranded on an isolated and mournful shore. The grandfather steeled himself to the double loss, for the child's sake; but the boy of eleven succumbed. Few of the world's great sufferers, of whatever age or condition, have mourned as this child mourned, or shown the effects of his grief so deeply or so long. Not till he had passed his majority did the line, carved in one day in his baby forehead, lose any of its intensity; and there are those who declare that even later than that, the midnight stillness of the house was disturbed from time to time by his muffled shriek of "Mother! Mother!" sending the servants from the house, and adding one more horror to the many which clung about this accursed mansion.

Of this cry Violet had heard, and it was that and the door— But I have already told you about the door which she was still looking for, when her two companions suddenly halted, and she found herself on the threshold of the library, in full view of Mr. Van Broecklyn and his two guests.

Slight and fairy-like in figure, with an air of modest reserve more in keeping with her youth and dainty dimpling beauty than with her errand, her appearance produced an astonishment

which none of the gentlemen were able to disguise. This the clever detective, with a genius for social problems and odd elusive cases! This darling of the ball-room in satin and pearls! Mr. Spielhagen glanced at Mr. Cornell, and Mr. Cornell at Mr. Spielhagen, and both at Mr. Upjohn, in very evident distrust. As for Violet, she had eyes only for Mr. Van Broecklyn who stood before her in a surprise equal to that of the others but with more restraint in its expression.

She was not disappointed in him. She had expected to see a man, reserved almost to the point of austerity. And she found his first look even more awe-compelling than her imagination had pictured; so much so indeed, that her resolution faltered, and she took a quick step backward; which seeing, he smiled and her heart and hopes grew warm again. That he could smile, and smile with absolute sweetness, was her great comfort when later— But I am introducing you too hurriedly to the catastrophe. There is much to be told first.

I pass over the preliminaries, and come at once to the moment when Violet, having listened to a repetition of the full facts, stood with downcast eyes before these gentlemen, complaining in some alarm to herself:

"They expect me to tell them now and without further search or parley just where this missing page is. I shall have to balk that expectation without losing their confidence. But how?"

Summoning up her courage and meeting each inquiring eye with a look which seemed to carry a different message to each, she remarked very quietly:

"This is not a matter to guess at. I must have time and I must look a little deeper into the facts just given me. I presume that the table I see over there is the one upon which Mr. Upjohn laid the manuscript during Mr. Speilhagen's unconsciousness."

All nodded.

"Is it—I mean the table—in the same condition it was then? Has nothing been taken from it except the manuscript?"

"Nothing."

"Then the missing page is not there," she smiled, pointing to its bare top. A pause, during which she stood with her gaze fixed on the floor before her. She was thinking and thinking hard.

Suddenly she came to a decision. Addressing Mr. Upjohn she asked if he were quite sure that in taking the manuscript from Mr. Spielhagen's hand he had neither disarranged nor dropped one of its pages.

The answer was unequivocal.

"Then," she declared, with quiet assurance and a steady meeting with her own of every eye, "as the thirteenth page was not found among the others when they were taken from this table, nor on the persons of either Mr. Cornell or Mr. Spielhagen, it is still in that inner room."

"Impossible!" came from every lip, each in a different tone. "That room is absolutely empty."

"May I have a look at its emptiness?" she asked, with a naïve glance at Mr. Van Broecklyn.

"There is positively nothing in the room but the chair Mr. Speilhagen sat on," objected that gentleman with a noticeable air of reluctance.

"Still, may I not have a look at it?"

she persisted, with that disarming smile she kept for great occasions.

Mr. Van Broecklyn bowed. He could not refuse a request so urged, but his step was slow and his manner next to ungracious as he led the way to the door of the adjoining room and threw it open.

Just what she had been told to expect! Bare walls and floors and an empty chair! Yet she did not instantly withdraw, but stood silently contemplating the panelled wainscoting surrounding her, as though she suspected it of containing some secret hiding-place not apparent to the eye.

Mr. Van Broecklyn, noting this, hastened to say:

"The walls are sound, Miss Strange. They contain no hidden cupboards."

"And that door?" she asked, pointing to a portion of the wainscoting so exactly like the rest that only the most experienced eye could detect the line of deeper colour which marked an opening.

For an insant Mr. Van Broecklyn stood rigid, then the immovable pallor, which was one of his chief characteristics, gave way to a deep flush, as he explained:

"There was a door there once; but it has been permanently closed. With cement," he forced himself to add, his countenance losing its evanescent colour till it shone ghastly again in the strong light.

With difficulty Violet preserved her show of composure. "*The* door!" she murmured to herself, "I have found it. The great historic door!" But her tone was light as she ventured to say:

"Then it can no longer be opened by your hand or any other?"

"It could not be opened with an axe."

Violet sighed in the midst of her triumph. Her curiosity had been satisfied, but the problem she had been set to solve looked inexplicable. But she was not one to yield easily to discouragement. Marking the disappointment approaching to disdain in every eye but Mr. Upjohn's, she drew herself up—(she had not far to draw) and made this final proposal.

"A sheet of paper," she remarked, "of the size of this one cannot be spirited away, or dissolved into thin air. It exists; it is here; and all we want is some happy thought in order to find it. I acknowledge that that happy thought has not come to me yet, but sometimes I get it in what may seem to you a very odd way. Forgetting myself, I try to assume the individuality of the person who has worked the mystery. If I can think with his thoughts, I possibly may follow him in his actions. In this case I should like to make believe for a few moments that I am Mr. Spielhagen" (with what a delicious smile she said this). "I should like to hold his thesis in my hand and be interrupted in my reading by Mr. Cornell offering me a glass of cordial; then I should like to nod and slip off mentally into a deep sleep. Possibly in that sleep the dream may come which will clarify the whole situation. Will you humour me so far?"

A ridiculous concession, but finally she had her way; the farce was enacted and they left her as she had requested

then to do, alone with her dreams in the small room.

Suddenly they heard her cry out, and in another moment she appeared before them, the picture of excitement.

"Is this chair standing exactly as it did when Mr. Spielhagen occupied it?" she asked.

"No," said Mr. Upjohn, "it faced the other way."

She stepped back and twirled the chair about with her disengaged hand.

"So?"

Mr. Upjohn and Mr. Speilhagen both nodded, so did the others when she glanced at them.

With a sign of ill-concealed satisfaction, she drew their attention to herself; then eagerly cried:

"Gentlemen, look here!"

Seating herself, she allowed her whole body to relax till she presented the picture of one calmly asleep. Then, as they continued to gaze at her with fascinated eyes, not knowing what to expect, they saw something white escape from her lap and slide across the floor till it touched and was stayed by the wainscot. It was the top page of the manuscript she held, and as some inkling of the truth reached their astonished minds, she sprang impetuously to her feet, and, pointing to the fallen sheet, cried:

"Do you understand now? Look where it lies, and then look here!"

She had bounded toward the wall and was now on her knees pointing to the bottom of the wainscot, just a few inches to the left of the fallen page.

"A crack!" she cried, "under what was once the door. It's a very thin one, hardly perceptible to the eye. But see!" Here she laid her finger on the fallen paper and drawing it towards her, pushed it carefully against the lower edge of the wainscot. Half of it at once disappeared.

"I could easily slip it all through," she assured them, withdrawing the sheet and leaping to her feet in triumph. "You know now where the missing page lies, Mr. Spielhagen. All that remains is for Mr. Van Broecklyn to get it for you."

CHAPTER IV

THE cries of mingled astonishment and relief which greeted this simple elucidation of the mystery were broken by a curiously choked, almost unintelligible, cry. It came from the man thus appealed to, who, unnoticed by them all, had started at her first word and gradually, as action followed action, withdrawn himself till he now stood alone and in an attitude almost of defiance behind the large table in the centre of the library.

"I am sorry," he began, with a brusqueness which gradually toned down into a forced urbanity as he beheld every eye fixed upon him in amazement, "that circumstances forbid my being of assistance to you in this unfortunate matter. If the paper lies where you say, and I see no other explanation of its loss, I am afraid it will have to remain there for this night at least. The cement in which that door is embedded is thick as any wall; it would take men with pickaxes, possibly with dynamite, to make a breach there wide enough for anyone to reach in. And we are far from any such help."

In the midst of the consternation

caused by these words, the clock on the mantel behind his back rang out the hour. It was but a double stroke but that meant two hours after midnight and had the effect of a knell in the hearts of those most interested.

"But I am expected to give that formula into the hands of our manager before six o'clock in the morning. The steamer sails at a quarter after."

"Can't you reproduce a copy of it from memory?" someone asked; "and insert it in its proper place among the pages you hold there?"

"The paper would not be the same. That would lead to questions and the truth would come out. As the chief value of the process contained in that formula lies in its secrecy, no explanation I could give would relieve me from the suspicions which an acknowledgment of the existence of a third copy, however well hidden, would entail. I should lose my great opportunity."

Mr. Cornell's state of mind can be imagined. In an access of mingled regret and despair, he cast a glance at Violet, who, with a nod of understanding, left the little room in which they still stood, and approached Mr. Van Broecklyn.

Lifting up her head,—for he was very tall,—and instinctively rising on her toes the nearer to reach his ear, she asked in a cautious whisper:

"Is there no other way of reaching that place?"

She acknowledged afterwards, that for one moment her heart stood still from fear, such a change took place in his face, though she says he did not move a muscle. Then, just when she was expecting from him some harsh or forbidding word, he wheeled abruptly away from her and crossing to a window at his side, lifted the shade and looked out. When he returned, he was his usual self so far as she could see.

"There is a way," he now confided to her in a tone as low as her own, "but it can only be taken by a child."

"Not by me?" she asked, smiling down at her own childish proportions.

For an instant he seemed taken aback, then she saw his hand begin to tremble and his lips twitch. Somehow—she knew not why—she began to pity him, and asked herself as she felt rather than saw the struggle in his mind, that here was a trouble which if once understood would greatly dwarf that of the two men in the room behind them.

"I am discreet," she whisperingly declared. "I have heard the history of that door—how it was against the tradition of the family to have it opened. There must have been some very dreadful reason. But old superstitions do not affect me, and if you will allow me to take the way you mention, I will follow your bidding exactly, and will not trouble myself about anything but the recovery of this paper, which must lie only a little way inside that blocked-up door."

Was his look one of rebuke at her presumption, or just the constrained expression of a perturbed mind? Probably, the latter, for while she watched him for some understanding of his mood, he reached out his hand and touched one of the satin folds crossing her shoulder.

"You would soil this irretrievably," said he.

"There is stuff in the stores for another," she smiled. Slowly his touch

deepened into pressure. Watching him she saw the crust of some old fear or dominant superstition melt under her eyes, and was quite prepared, when he remarked, with what for him was a lightsome air:

"I will buy the stuff, if you will dare the darkness and intricacies of our old cellar. I can give you no light. You will have to feel your way according to my direction."

"I am ready to dare anything."

He left her abruptly.

"I will warn Miss Digby," he called back. "She shall go with you as far as the cellar."

CHAPTER V

VIOLET in her short career as an investigator of mysteries had been in many a situation calling for more than womanly nerve and courage. But never —or so it seemed to her at the time— had she experienced a greater depression of spirit than when she stood with Miss Digby before a small door at the extreme end of the cellar, and understood that here was her road—a road which once entered, she must take alone.

First, it was such a small door! No child older than eleven could possibly squeeze through it. But she was of the size of a child of eleven and might possibly manage that difficulty.

Secondly: there are always some unforeseen possibilities in every situation, and though she had listened carefully to Mr. Van Broecklyn's directions and was sure that she knew them by heart, she wished she had kissed her father more tenderly in leaving him that night for the ball, and that she had not pouted so undutifully at some harsh stricture he had made. Did this mean fear? She despised the feeling if it did.

Thirdly: She hated darkness. She knew this when she offered herself for this undertaking; but she was in a bright room at the moment and only imagined what she must now face as a reality. But one jet had been lit in the cellar and that near the entrance. Mr. Van Broecklyn seemed not to need light, even in his unfastening of the small door which Violet was sure had been protected by more than one lock.

Doubt, shadow, and a solitary climb between unknown walls, with only a streak of light for her goal, and the clinging pressure of Florence Digby's hand on her own for solace—surely the prospect was one to tax the courage of her young heart to its limit. But she had promised, and she would fulfill. So with a brave smile she stooped to the little door, and in another moment had started on her journey.

For journey the shortest distance may seem when every inch means a heart-throb and one grows old in traversing a foot. At first the way was easy; she had but to crawl up a slight incline with the comforting consciousness that two people were within reach of her voice, almost within sound of her beating heart. But presently she came to a turn, beyond which her fingers failed to reach any wall on her left. Then came a step up which she stumbled, and farther on a short flight, each tread of which she had been told to test before she ventured to climb it, lest the decay of innumerable years should have weakened the wood too much to bear her weight. One, two, three, four, five steps! Then a landing with an open

space beyond. Half of her journey was done. Here she felt she could give a minute to drawing her breath naturally, if the air, unchanged in years, would allow her to do so. Besides, here she had been enjoined to do a certain thing and to do it according to instructions. Three matches had been given her and a little night candle. Denied all light up to now, it was at this point she was to light her candle and place it on the floor, so that in returning she should not miss the staircase and get a fall. She had promised to do this, and was only too happy to see a spark of light scintillate into life in the immeasurable darkness.

She was now in a great room long closed to the world, where once officers in Colonial wars had feasted, and more than one council had been held. A room, too, which had seen more than one tragic happening, as its almost unparalleled isolation proclaimed. So much Mr. Van Broecklyn had told her, but she was warned to be careful in traversing it and not upon any pretext to swerve aside from the right-hand wall till she came to a huge mantelpiece. This passed, and a sharp corner turned, she ought to see somewhere in the dim spaces before her a streak of vivid light shining through the crack at the bottom of the blocked-up door. The paper should be somewhere near this streak.

All simple, all easy of accomplishment, if only that streak of light were all she was likely to see or think of. If the horror which was gripping her throat should not take shape! If things would remain shrouded in impenetrable darkness, and not force themselves in shadowy suggestion upon her excited fancy! But the blackness of the passageway through which she had just struggled, was not to be found here. Whether it was the effect of that same flame flickering at the top of the staircase behind her, or of some change in her own powers of seeing, surely there was a difference in her present outlook. Tall shapes were becoming visible—the air was no longer blank—she could see—Then suddenly she saw why. In the wall high up on her right was a window. It was small and all but invisible, being covered on the outside with vines, and on the inside with the cobwebs of a century. But some small gleams from the starlight night came through, making phantasms out of ordinary things which unseen were horrible enough, and half seen choked her heart with terror.

"I cannot bear it," she whispered to herself even while creeping forward, her hand upon the wall. "I will close my eyes" was her next thought. "I will make my own darkness," and with a spasmodic forcing of her lids together, she continued to creep on, passing the mantelpiece, where she knocked against something which fell with an awful clatter.

This sound, followed as it was by that of smothered voices from the excited group awaiting the result of her experiment from behind the impenetrable wall she should be nearing now if she had followed her instructions aright, freed her instantly from her fancies; and opening her eyes once more, she cast a look ahead, and to her delight, saw but a few steps away, the thin streak of bright light which marked the end of her journey.

It took her but a moment after that

to find the missing page, and picking it up in haste from the dusty floor, she turned herself quickly about and joyfully began to retrace her steps. Why, then, was it that in the course of a few minutes more her voice suddenly broke into a wild, unearthly shriek, which ringing with terror burst the bounds of that dungeon-like room, and sank, a barbed shaft, into the breasts of those awaiting the result of her doubtful adventure, at either end of this dread no-thoroughfare.

What had happened?

If they had thought to look out, they would have seen that the moon—held in check by a bank cloud occupying half the heavens—had suddenly burst its bounds and was sending long bars of revealing light into every uncurtained window.

CHAPTER VI

Florence Digby, in her short and sheltered life, had possibly never known any very great or deep emotion. But she touched the bottom of extreme terror at that moment, as with her ears thrilling with Violet's piercing cry, she turned to look at Mr. Van Broecklyn, and beheld the instantaneous wreck it had made of this seemingly strong man. Not till he came to lie in his coffin would he show a more ghastly countenance; and trembling herself almost to the point of falling, she caught him by the arm and sought to read in his face what had happened. Something disastrous she was sure; something which he had feared and was partially prepared for, yet which in happening had crushed him. Was it a pitfall into which the poor little lady had fallen? If so—But he is speaking—mumbling low words to himself. Some of them she can hear. He is reproaching himself—repeating over and over that he should never have taken such a chance; that he should have remembered her youth—the weakness of a young girl's nerve. He had been mad, and now—and now—

With the repetition of this word his murmuring ceased. All his energies were now absorbed in listening at the low door separating him from what he was agonizing to know—a door impossible to enter, impossible to enlarge—a barrier to all help—an opening whereby sound might pass but nothing else save her own small body, now lying—where?

"Is she hurt?" faltered Florence, stooping, herself, to listen. "Can you hear anything—anything?"

For an instant he did not answer; every faculty was absorbed in the one sense; then slowly and in gasps he began to mutter:

"I think—I hear—*something*. Her step—no, no, no step. All is as quiet as death; not a sound,—not a breath—she has fainted. O God! O God! Why this calamity on top of all!"

He had sprung to his feet at the utterance of this invocation, but next moment was down on his knees again, listening—listening.

Never was silence more profound; they were hearkening for murmurs from a tomb. Florence began to sense the full horror of it all, and was swaying helplessly when Mr. Van Broecklyn impulsively lifted his hand in an admonitory Hush! and through the daze of her faculties a small far sound began

to make itself heard, growing louder as she waited, then becoming faint again, then altogether ceasing only to renew itself once more, till it resolved into an approaching step, faltering in its course, but coming ever nearer and nearer.

"She's safe! She's not hurt!" sprang from Florence's lips in inexpressible relief; and expecting Mr. Van Broecklyn to show an equal joy, she turned toward him, with the cheerful cry.

"Now if she has been so fortunate as to find that missing page, we shall all be repaid for our fight."

A movement on his part, a shifting of position which brought him finally to his feet, but he gave no other proof of having heard her, nor did his countenance mirror her relief. "It is as if he dreaded, instead of hailed, her return," was Florence's inward comment as she watched him involuntarily recoil at each fresh token of Violet's advance.

Yet because this seemed so very unnatural, he persisted in her efforts to lighten the situation, and when he made no attempt to encourage Violet in her approach, she herself stooped and called out a cheerful welcome which must have rung sweetly in the poor little detective's ears.

A sorry sight was Violet, when, helped by Florence she finally crawled into view through the narrow opening and stood once again on the cellar floor. Pale, trembling, and soiled with the dust of years, she presented a helpless figure enough, till the joy in Florence's face recalled some of her spirit, and, glancing down at her hand in which a sheet of paper was visible, she asked for Mr. Spielhagen.

"I've got the formula," she said. "If you will bring him, I will hand it over to him here."

Not a word of her adventure; nor so much as one glance at Mr. Van Broecklyn, standing far back in the shadows.

Nor was she more communicative, when, the formula restored and everything made right with Mr. Spielhagen, they all came together again in the library for a final word.

"I was frightened by the silence and the darkness, and so cried out," she explained in answer to their questions. "Anyone would have done so who found himself alone in so musty a place," she added, with an attempt at lightsomeness which deepened the pallor on Mr. Van Broecklyn's cheek, already sufficiently noticeable to have been remarked upon by more than one.

"No ghosts?" laughed Mr. Cornell, too happy in the return of his hopes to be fully sensible of the feelings of those about him. "No whispers from impalpable lips or touches from spectre hands? Nothing to explain the mystery of that room so long shut up that even Mr. Van Broecklyn declares himself ignorant of its secret?"

"Nothing," returned Violet, showing her dimples in full force now.

"If Miss Strange had any such experiences—if she has anything to tell worthy of so marked a curiosity, she will tell now," came from the gentleman just alluded to, in tones so stern and strange that all show of frivolity ceased on the instant. "Have you anything to tell, Miss Strange?"

Greatly startled, she regarded him with widening eyes for a moment, then

with a move towards the door, remarked with a general look about her:

"Mr. Van Broecklyn knows his own house, and doubtless can relate its histories if he will. I am a busy little body who having finished my work am now ready to return home, there to wait for the next problem which an indulgent fate may offer me."

She was near the threshold—she was about to take her leave, when suddenly she felt two hands fall on her shoulder, and turning, met the eyes of Mr. Van Broecklyn, burning into her own.

"You saw!" dropped in an almost inaudible whisper from his lips.

The shiver which shook her answered him better than any word.

With an exclamation of despair, he withdrew his hands, and facing the others now standing together recovered some of his self-possession:

"I must ask for another hour of your company. I can no longer keep my sorrow to myself. A dividing line has just been drawn across my life, and I must have the sympathy of someone who knows my past, or I shall go mad in my self-imposed solitude. Come back, Miss Strange. You of all others have the prior right to hear."

CHAPTER VII

"I SHALL have to begin," said he, when they were all seated and ready to listen, "by giving you some idea, not so much of the family tradition, as of the effect of this tradition upon all who bore the name of Van Broecklyn. This is not the only house, even in America, which contains a room shut away from intrusion. In England there are many. But there is this difference between most of them and ours. No bars or locks forcibly held shut the door we were forbidden to open. The command was enough; that and the superstitious fear which such a command, attended by a long and unquestioning obedience, was likely to engender.

"I know no more than you do why some early ancestor laid his ban upon this room. But from my earliest years I was given to understand that there was one latch in the house which was never to be lifted; that any fault would be forgiven sooner than that; that the honour of the whole family stood in the way of disobedience, and that I was to preserve that honour to my dying day. You will say that all this is fantastic, and wonder that sane people in these modern times should subject themselves to such a ridiculous restriction, especially when no good reason was alleged, and the very source of the tradition from which it sprung forgotten. You are right; but if you look long into human nature, you will see that the bonds which hold the firmest are not material ones—that an idea will make a man and mould a character—that it lies at the source of all heroisms and is to be courted or feared as the case may be.

"For me it possessed a power proportionate to my loneliness. I don't think there was ever a more lonely child. My father and mother were so unhappy in each other's companionship that one or other of them was almost always away. But I saw little of either even when they were at home. The constraint in their attitude toward each other affected their conduct toward me. I have asked myself more than once if either of them

had any real affection for me. To my father I spoke of her; to her of him; and never pleasurably. This I am forced to say or you cannot understand my story. Would to God I could tell another tale! Would to God I had such memories as other men have of a father's clasp, a mother's kiss—but no! my grief, already profound, might have become abysmal. Perhaps it is best as it is; only, I might have been a different child, and made for myself a different fate—who knows.

"As it was, I was thrown almost entirely upon my own resources for any amusement. This led me to a discovery I made one day. In a far part of the cellar behind some heavy casks, I found a little door. It was so low—so exactly fitted to my small body, that I had the greatest desire to enter it. But I could not get around the casks. At last an expedient occurred to me. We had an old servant who came nearer loving me than anyone else. One day when I chanced to be alone in the cellar, I took out my ball and began throwing it about. Finally it landed behind the casks, and I ran with a beseeching cry to Michael, to move them.

"It was a task requiring no little strength and address, but he managed, after a few herculean efforts, to shift them aside and I saw with delight my way opened to that mysterious little door. But I did not approach it then; some instinct deterred me. But when the opportunity came for me to venture there alone, I did so, in the most adventurous spirit, and began my operations by sliding behind the casks and testing the handle of the little door. It turned, and after a pull or two the door yielded. With my heart in my mouth, I stooped and peered in. I could see nothing—a black hole and nothing more. This caused me a moment's hesitation. I was afraid of the dark—had always been. But curiosity and the spirit of adventure triumphed. Saying to myself that I was Robinson Crusoe exploring the cave, I crawled in, only to find that I had gained nothing. It was as dark inside as it had looked to be from without.

"There was no fun in this, so I crawled back and when I tried the experiment again, it was with a bit of candle in my hand, and a surreptitous match or two. What I saw, when with a very trembling little hand I had lighted one of the matches, would have been disappointing to most boys, but not to me. The litter and old boards I saw in odd corners about me were full of possibilities, while in the dimness beyond I seemed to perceive a sort of staircase which might lead—I do not think I made any attempt to answer that question even in my own mind, but when, after some hesitation and a sense of great daring, I finally crept up those steps, I remember very well my sensation at finding myself in front of a narrow closed door. It suggested too vividly the one in Grandfather's little room—the door in the wainscot which we were never to open. I had my first real trembling fit here, and at once fascinated and repelled by this obstruction I stumbled and lost my candle, which, going out in the fall, left me in total darkness and a very frightened state of mind. For my imagination, which had been greatly stirred by my own vague thoughts of the forbidden

room, immediately began to people the space about me with ghoulish figures. How should I escape them, how ever reach my own little room again, undetected and in safety?

"But these terrors, deep as they were, were nothing to the real fright which seized me when, the darkness finally braved, and the way found back into the bright, wide-open halls of the house, I became conscious of having dropped something besides the candle. My match-box was gone—not *my* match-box, but my grandfather's which I had found lying on his table and carried off on this adventure, in all the confidence of irresponsible youth. To make use of it for a little while, trusting to his not missing it in the confusion I had noticed about the house that morning, was one thing; to lose it was another. It was no common box. Made of gold and cherished for some special reason well known to himself, I had often heard him say that some day I would appreciate its value and be glad to own it. And I had left it in that hole and at any minute he might miss it—possibly ask for it! The day was one of torment. My mother was away or shut up in her room. My father—I don't know just what thoughts I had about him. He was not to be seen either, and the servants cast strange looks at me when I spoke his name. But I little realized the blow which had just fallen upon the house in his definite departure, and only thought of my own trouble, and of how I should meet my grandfather's eye when the hour came for him to draw me to his knee for his usual good-night.

"That I was spared this ordeal for the first time this very night first comforted me, then added to my distress. He had discovered his loss and was angry. On the morrow he would ask me for the box and I would have to lie, for never could I fine the courage to tell him where I had been. Such an act of presumption he would never forgive, or so I thought as I lay and shivered in my little bed. That his coldness, his neglect, sprang from the discovery just made that my mother as well as my father had just fled the house forever was as little known to me as the morning calamity. I had been given my usual tendance and was tucked safely into bed; but the gloom, the silence which presently settled upon the house had a very different explanation in my mind for the real one. My sin (for such it loomed large in my mind by this time) coloured the whole situation and accounted for every event.

"At what hour I slipped from my bed on to the cold floor, I shall never know. To me it seemed to be in the dead of night; but I doubt if it were more than ten. So slowly creep away the moments to a wakeful child. I had made a great resolve. Awful as the prospect seemed to me,—frightened as I was by the very thought,—I had determined in my small mind to go down into the cellar, and into the midnight hole again, in search of the lost box. I would take a candle and matches, this time from my own mantel-shelf, and if everyone was asleep, as appeared from the deathly quiet of the house, I would be able to go and come without anybody ever being the wiser.

"Dressing in the dark, I found my matches and my candle and, putting them in one of my pockets, softly

opened my door and looked out. Nobody was stirring; every light was out except a solitary one in the lower hall. That this still burned conveyed no meaning to my mind. How could I know that the house was so still and the rooms so dark because everyone was out searching for some clue to my mother's flight? If I had looked at the clock—but I did not; I was too intent upon my errand, too filled with the fever of my desperate undertaking, to be affected by anything not bearing directly upon it.

"Of the terror caused by my shadow on the wall as I made the turn in the hall below, I have as keen a recollection to-day as though it happened yesterday. But that did not deter me; nothing deterred me, till safe in the cellar I crouched down behind the casks to get my breath again before entering the hole beyond.

"I had made some noise in feeling my way around these casks, and I trembled lest these sounds had been heard upstairs! But this fear soon gave place to one far greater. Other sounds were making themselves heard. A din of small skurrying feet above, below, on every side of me! Rats! rats in the wall! rats on the cellar bottom! How I ever stirred from the spot I do not know, but when I did stir, it was to go forward, and enter the uncanny hole.

"I had intended to light my candle when I got inside; but for some reason I went stumbling along in the dark, following the wall till I got to the steps where I had dropped the box. Here a light was necessary, but my hand did not go to my pocket. I thought it better to climb the steps first, and softly one foot found the tread and then another. I had only three more to climb and then my right hand, now feeling its way along the wall, would be free to strike a match. I climbed the three steps and was steadying myself against the door for a final plunge, when something happened—something so strange, so unexpected, and so incredible that I wonder I did not shriek aloud in my terror. The door was moving under my hand. It was slowly opening inward. I could feel the chill made by the widening crack. Moment by moment this chill increased; the gap was growing—a presence was there—a presence before which I sank in a small heap upon the landing. Would it advance? Had it feet—hands? Was it a presence which could be felt?

"Whatever it was, it made no attempt to pass and presently I lifted my head only to quake anew at the sound of a voice—a human voice—my mother's voice—so near me that by putting out my arms I might have touched her.

"She was speaking to my father. I knew it from the tone. She was saying words which, little understood as they were, made such a havoc in my youthful mind that I have never forgotten them.

" 'I have come!' she said. 'They think I have fled the house and are looking far and wide for me. We shall not be disturbed. Who could think of looking here for either you or me?'

"Here! The word sank like a plummet in my breast. I had known for some few minutes that I was on the threshold of the forbidden room; but they were *in* it. I can scarcely make you understand the tumult which this awoke in my brain. Somehow, I had

never thought that any such braving of the house's law would be possible.

"I heard my father's answer, but it conveyed no meaning to me. I also realized that he spoke from a distance,—that he was at one end of the room while we were at the other. I was presently to have this idea confirmed, for while I was striving with all my might and main to subdue my very heart-throbs so that she would not hear me or suspect my presence, the darkness—I should rather say the blackness of the place yielded to a flash of lightning—heat lightning, all glare and no sound—and I caught an instantaneous vision of my father's figure standing with gleaming things about him, which affected me at the moment as supernatural, but which, in later years, I decided to have been weapons hanging on a wall.

"She saw him too, for she gave a quick laugh and said they would not need any candles; and then, there was another flash and I saw something in his hand and something in hers, and though I did not yet understand, I felt myself turning deathly sick and gave a choking gasp which was lost in the rush she made into the centre of the room, and the keenness of her swift low cry.

"'*Garde-toi!* for only one of us will ever leave this room alive!'

"A duel! a duel to the death between this husband and wife—this father and mother—in this hole of dead tragedies and within the sight and hearing of their child! Has Satan ever devised a scheme more hideous for ruining the life of an eleven-year-old boy!

"Not that I took it all in at once. I was too innocent and much too dazed to comprehend such hatred, much less the passions which engendered it. I only knew that something horrible—something beyond the conception of my childish mind—was going to take place in the darkness before me; and the terror of it made me speechless; would to God it had made me deaf and blind and dead!

"She had dashed from her corner and he had slid away from his, as the next fantastic gleam which lit up the room showed me. It also showed the weapons in their hands, and for a moment I felt reassured when I saw these were swords, for I had seen them before with foils in their hands practising for exercise, as they said, in the great garret. But the swords had buttons on them, and this time the tips were sharp and shone in the keen light.

"An exclamation from her and a growl of rage from him were followed by movements I could scarcely hear, but which were terrifying from their very quiet. Then the sound of a clash. The swords had crossed.

"Had the lightning flashed forth then, the end of one of them might have occurred. But the darkness remained undisturbed, and when the glare relit the great room again, they were already far apart. This called out a word from him; the one sentence he spoke—I can never forget it:

"'Rhoda, there is blood on your sleeve; I have wounded you. Shall we call it off and fly, as the poor creatures in there think we have, to the opposite ends of the earth?'

"I almost spoke; I almost added my childish plea to his for them to stop—to remember me and stop. But not a muscle in my throat responded to my

agonized effort. Her cold, clear 'No!' fell before my tongue was loosed or my heart freed from the ponderous weight crushing it.

"'I have vowed and *I* keep my promises,' she went on in a tone quite strange to me. 'What would either's life be worth with the other alive and happy in this world?'

"He made no answer; and those subtle movements—shadows of movements I might almost call them—recommenced. Then there came a sudden cry, shrill and poignant—had Grandfather been in his room he would surely have heard it—and the flash coming almost simultaneously with its utterance, I saw what has haunted my sleep from that day to this, my father pinned against the wall, sword still in hand, and before him my mother, fiercely triumphant, her staring eyes fixed on his and—

"Nature could bear no more; the band loosened from my throat; the oppression lifted from my breast long enough for me to give one wild wail and she turned, saw (heaven sent its flashes quickly at this moment), and recognizing my childish form, all the horror of her deed (or so I have fondly hoped) rose within her, and she gave a start and fell full upon the point upturned to receive her.

"A groan; then a gasping sigh from him, and silence settled upon the room and upon my heart and so far as I knew upon the whole created world.

"That is my story, friends. Do you wonder that I have never been or lived like other men?"

After a few moments of sympathetic silence, Mr. Van Broecklyn went on to say:

"I don't think I ever had a moment's doubt that my parents both lay dead on the floor of that great room. When I came to myself—which may have been soon, and may not have been for a long while—the lightning had ceased to flash, leaving the darkness stretching like a blank pall between me and that spot in which were concentrated all the terrors of which my imagination was capable. I dared not enter it. I dared not take one step that way. My instinct was to fly and hide my trembling body again in my own bed; and associated with this, in fact dominating it and making me old before my time, was another—never to tell; never to let anyone, least of all my grandfather—know what that forbidden room now contained. I felt in an irresistible sort of way that my father's and mother's honour was at stake. Besides, terror held me back; I felt that I should die if I spoke. Childhood has such terrors and such heroisms. Silence often covers in such, abysses of thought and feeling which astonish us in later years. There is no suffering like a child's, terrified by a secret it dare not for some reason disclose.

"Events aided me. When, in desperation to see once more the light and all the things which linked me to life—my little bed, the toys on the windowsill, my squirrel in its cage—I forced myself to retraverse the empty house, expecting at every turn to hear my father's voice or come upon the image of my mother—yes, such was the confusion of my mind, though I knew well enough even then that they were dead and that I should never hear the one or see the other. I

I was so benumbed with the cold in my half-dressed condition, that I woke in a fever next morning after a terrible dream which forced from my lips the cry of 'Mother! Mother!'—only that.

"I was cautious even in delirium. This delirium and my flushed cheeks and shining eyes led them to be very careful to me. I was told that my mother was away from home; and when after two days of search they were quite sure all efforts to find either her or my father were likely to prove fruitless, that she had gone to Europe where we would follow her as soon as I was well. This promise, offering as it did, a prospect of immediate release from the terrors which were consuming me, had an extraordinary effect upon me. I got up out of my bed saying that I was well now and ready to start on the instant. The doctor, finding my pulse equable, and my whole condition wonderfully improved, and attributing it, as was natural, to my hope of soon joining my mother, advised my whim to be humoured and this hope kept active until travel and intercourse with children should give me strength and prepare me for the bitter truth ultimately awaiting me. They listened to him and in twenty-four hours our preparations were made. We saw the house closed—with what emotions surging in one small breast, I leave you to imagine—and then started on our long tour. For five years we wandered over the continent of Europe, my grandfather finding distraction, as well as myself, in foreign scenes and associations.

"But return was inevitable. What I suffered on re-entering this house, God and my sleepless pillow alone knew. Had any discovery been made in our absence; or would it be made now that renovation and repairs of all kinds were necessary? Time finally answered me. My secret was safe and likely to continue so, and this fact once settled, life became endurable, if not cheerful. Since then I have spent only two nights out of this house, and they were unavoidable. When my grandfather died I had the wainscot door cemented in. It was done from this side and the cement painted to match the wood. No one opened the door nor have I ever crossed its threshold. Sometimes I think I have been foolish; and sometimes I know that I have been very wise. My reason has stood firm; how do I know that it would have done so if I had subjected myself to the possible discovery that one or both of them might have been saved if I had disclosed instead of concealed my adventure."

A pause during which white horror had shone on every face; then with a final glance at Violet, he said:

"What sequel do you see to this story, Miss Strange? I can tell the past, I leave you to picture the future."

Rising, she let her eye travel from face to face till it rested on the one awaiting it, when she answered dreamily:

"If some morning in the news column there should appear an account of the ancient and historic home of the Van Broecklyns having burned to the ground in the night, the whole country would mourn, and the city feel defrauded of one of its treasures. But there are five persons who would see in it the sequel which you ask for."

When this happened, as it did, some few weeks later, the astonishing discovery was made that no insurance had been put upon this house. Why was it that after such a loss Mr. Van Broecklyn seemed to renew his youth? It was a constant source of comment among his friends.

Madame Noel

It is very rare that a fugitive galley-slave escapes with any intention of amendment; most frequently the aim is to gain the capital, and then put in practice the vicious lessons acquired at the Bagnes, which, like most of our prisons, are schools in which they perfect themselves in the art of appropriating to themselves the property of another. Nearly all celebrated robbers only became expert after passing some time at the galleys. Some have undergone five or six sentences before they became thorough scoundrels; such as the famous Victor Desbois, and his comrade, Mongenet, called Le Tambour (Drummer), who, during various visits to Paris, committed a vast many of those robberies on which people love to descant as proofs of boldness and address.

These two men, who, for many years, were sent away with every chain, and as frequently escaped, were once more back again in Paris; the police got information of it, and I received the orders to search for them. All testified that they had acquaintances with other robbers no less formidable than themselves. A music mistress, whose son, called Noel with the Spectacles, a celebrated robber, was suspected of harboring these thieves. Madame Noel was a well-educated woman, and an admirable musician; she was esteemed a most accomplished performer by the middle class of tradespeople, who employed her to give lessons to their daughters. She was well known in the Marias and the Quartier Saint Denis, where the polish of her manners, the elegance of her language, the gentility of her dress, and that indescribable air of superiority, which the reverses of fortune can never entirely destroy, gave rise to the current belief that she was a member of one of those numerous families to whom the Revolution had only left its hauteur and its regrets.

To those who heard and saw her, without being acquainted, Madame Noel was a most interesting little woman; and besides, there was something touching in her situation; it was a mystery, and no one knew what had become of her husband. Some said that she had been early left in a state of widowhood; others, that she had been forsaken; and a third affirmed that she was a victim of seduction. I know not which of these conjectures approaches nearest the truth, but I know very well that Madame Noel was a little brunette, whose sparkling eye and roguish look were

softened down by that gentle demeanor, which seemed to increase the sweetness of her smile, and the tone of her voice, which was in the highest degree musical. There was a mixture of the angel and demon in her face, but the latter perhaps preponderated; for time had developed those traits which characterize evil thoughts.

Madame Noel was obliging and good, but only toward those individuals who were at issue with justice; she received them as the mother of a soldier would welcome the comrade of her son. To insure a welcome with her, it was enough to belong to the same "regiment" as Noel with the Spectacles; and then, as much for love of him, and from inclination, perhaps, she would do all in her power to aid, and was constantly looked upon as a "mother of robbers." At her house, they found shelter; it was she who provided for all their wants. She carried her complaisance so far as to seek "jobs of work" for them; and when a passport was indispensably requisite for their safety, she was not quiet until, by some means, she had succeeded in procuring one. Madame Noel had many friends among her own sex, and it was generally in one of their names that the passport was obtained. A powerful mixture of oxygenated muriatic acid obliterated the writing, and the description of the gentleman who required it, as well as the name which it suited his purpose to assume, replaced the feminine description. Madame Noel had generally by her a supply of these accommodating passports, which were filled according to circumstances, and the wants of the party requiring such assistance.

All the galley-slaves were children of Madame Noel, but those were the most in favor who could give her any account of her son; for them her devotion was boundless. Her house was open to all fugitives, who made it their rendezvous; and there must be gratitude even among them, for the police were informed that they came frequently to Mother Noel's, for the pleasure of seeing her only; she was the confidante of all their plans, all their adventures, all their fears; in fact, they communicated all unreservedly, and never had cause to regret their reliance on her fidelity.

Mother Noel had never seen me; my features were quite unknown to her, although she had frequently heard of my name. There was, then, no difficulty in presenting myself before her, without giving her any cause for alarm; but to get her to point out to me the hiding-place of the men whom I sought to detect, was the end I aimed at, and I felt that it would be impossible to attain it without much skill and management.

At first, I resolved on passing myself off as a fugitive galley-slave; but it was necessary to borrow the name of some thief, whom her son or his comrades had mentioned to her in advantageous terms. Moreover, a little resemblance was positively requisite, and I endeavored to recollect if there were not one of the galley-slaves whom I knew had been associated with Noel with the Spectacles, and I could not remember one of my age, or whose person and features at all resembled mine. At last, by dint of much effort of memory, I recalled to mind one Germain, alias "the Captain," who had been an intimate acquaintance of Noel's, and although our similarity was very slight, yet I determined on personating him. Germain, as

well as myself, had often escaped from the Bagnes, and that was the only point of resemblance between us. He was about my age, but a smaller framed man; he had dark-brown hair, mine was light; he was thin, and I tolerably stout; his complexion was sallow, and mine fair, with a very clear skin; besides, Germain had an excessively long nose, took a vast deal of snuff, which, begriming his nostrils outside, and stuffing them up within, gave him a peculiarly nasal tone of voice. I had much to do in personating Germain; but the difficulty did not deter me. My hair, cut *a la mode des bagnes,* was dyed black, as well as my beard, after it had attained a growth of eight days; to embrown my countenance, I washed it with white walnut liquor; and to perfect the imitation, I garnished my upper lip thickly with a kind of coffee-grounds, which I plastered on by means of gum arabic, and thus became as nasal in my twang as Germain himself. My feet were doctored with equal care; I made blisters on them by rubbing in a certain composition, of which I had obtained the receipt at Brest. I also made the marks of the fetters; and when all my toilet was finished, dressed myself in the suitable garb. I had neglected nothing which could complete the metamorphosis—neither the shoes nor the marks of those horrid letters G A L. The costume was perfect; and the only thing wanting was a hundred of those companionable insects which people the solitudes of poverty, and which were, I believe, together with locusts and toads, one of the seven plagues of old Egypt. I procured some for money; and as soon as they were a little accustomed to their new domicile, which was speedily the case, I directed my steps toward the residence of Madame Noel, in the Rue Ticquetonne.

I arrived there, and knocking at the door, she opened it: a glance convincing her how matters stood with me, she desired me to enter, and on finding myself alone with her, I told her who I was. "Ah, my poor lad," she cried, "there is no occasion to tell me where you have come from; I am sure you must be dying with hunger!"

"Oh, yes," I answered, "I am indeed hungry; I have tasted nothing for twenty-four hours."

Instantly, without further question, she went out, and returned with a dish of hog's puddings and a bottle of wine, which she placed before me. I did not eat, I actually devoured; I stuffed myself, and all had disappeared without my saying a word between my first mouthful and my last. Mother Noel was delighted at my appetite, and when the cloth was removed she gave me a dram. "Ah, mother," I exclaimed, embracing her, "you restore me to life; Noel told me how good and kind you were:" and I then began to give her a statement of how I had left her son eighteen days before, and gave her information of all the prisoners in whom she felt interested. The details were so true and well known, that she could have no idea that I was an impostor.

"You must have heard of me," I continued; "I have gone through many an enterprise, and experienced many a reverse. I am called Germain, or the captain; you must know my name."

"Yes, yes, my friend," she said, "I know you well; my son and his friends have told me of your misfortunes; wel-

come, welcome, my dear captain. But heavens! what a state you are in: you must not remain in such a plight. I see you are infested with those wretched tormenting beasts who——; but I will get you a change of linen, and contrive something as a comfortable dress for you."

I expressed my gratitude to Madame Noel; and when I saw a good opportunity, without giving cause for the slightest suspicion, I asked what had become of Victor Desbois and his comrade Mongenet. "Desbois and Le Tambour? Ah! my dear, do not mention them, I beg of you," she replied; "that rogue Vidocq has given them very great uneasiness; since one Joseph (Joseph Longueville, an old police inspector), whom they have twice met in the streets, told them that there would soon be a search in this quarter, they have been compelled to cut and run, to avoid being taken."

"What," cried I with a disappointed air, "are they no longer in Paris?"

"Oh, they are not very far distant," replied Mother Noel; "they have not quitted the environs of the 'great village' (Paris): I dare say we shall soon see them, for I trust they will speedily pay me a visit. I think they will be delighted to find you here."

"Oh, I assure you," said I, "that they will not be more delighted at the meeting than myself; and if you can write to them, I am sure they would eagerly send for me to join them."

"If I knew where they were," replied Mother Noel, "I would go myself and seek for them to please you; but I do not know their retreat, and the best thing for us to do is to be patient and await their arrival."

In my quality of a new-comer, I excited all Madame Noel's compassion and solicitude, and she attended to nothing but me. "Are you known to Vidocq and his two bull-dogs, Levesque and Compère?" she inquired.

"Alas! yes," was my reply "they have caught me twice."

"In that case, then, be on your guard: Vidocq is often disguised; he assumes characters, costumes, and shapes, to get hold of unfortunates like yourself."

We conversed together for two hours, when Madame Noel offered me a foot-bath, which I accepted; and when it was prepared, I took off my shoes and stockings, on which she discovered my wounded feet, and said, with a most commiserating tone and manner, "How I pity you; what must you suffer! Why did you not tell me of this at first? you deserve to be scolded for it." And whilst thus reproaching me, she examined my feet; and then pricked the blisters, drew a piece of worsted through each, and anointed my feet with a salve, which she assured me would have the effect of speedily curing them.

The bath concluded, she brought me some clean linen; and, as she thought of all that was needful, added a razor, recommending me to shave. "I shall then see," she added, "about buying you some workman's clothes, as that is the best disguise for men who wish to pass unnoticed; and besides, good luck will turn up, and then you will get yourself some new ones."

As soon as I was thoroughly cleansed Mother Noel conducted me to a sleeping-room, a small apartment, which served as the workshop for false keys,

the entrance to which was concealed by several gowns hanging from a row of pegs. "Here," said she, "is a bed in which your friends have slept three or four times; and you need not fear that the police will hunt you out; you may sleep secure as a dormouse."

"I am really in want of sleep," I replied, and begged her permission to take some repose, on which she left me to myself. Three hours afterward I awoke, and on getting up we renewed our conference. It was necessary to be armed at all points to deceive Madame Noel; there was not a trick or custom of the Bagnes with which she was not thoroughly informed; she knew not only the names of all the robbers whom she had seen, but was acquainted with every particular of the life of a great many others; and related with enthusiasm anecdotes of the most noted, particularly of her son for whom she had as much veneration as love.

"The dear boy, you would be delighted to see him!" said I.

"Yes, yes, overjoyed."

"Well, it is a happiness you will soon enjoy; for Noel has made arrangements for an escape, and is now only awaiting the propitious moment."

Madame Noel was happy in the expectation of seeing her son, and shed tears of tenderness at the very thoughts of it.

In the course of conversation, Mother Noel asked me if I had any affair (plan of robbery) in contemplation; and after having offered to procure me one, in case I was not provided, she questioned me on my skill in fabricating keys. I told her I was as adroit as Fossard.

"If that be the case," she rejoined, "I am easy, and you shall be soon furnished; for as you are so clever, I will go and buy at the ironmonger's a key which you can fit to my safety lock, so that you will have ingress and egress whenever you require it."

I expressed my feelings of obligation for so great a proof of her kindness; and as it was growing late, I went to bed reflecting on the mode of getting away from this lair without running the risk of being assassinated, if perchance any of the villains whom I was seeking should arrive before I had taken the necessary precautions.

I did not sleep, and arose as soon as I heard Madame Noel lighting her fire; she said I was an early riser, and that she would go and procure me what I wanted. A moment afterward she brought me a key not cut into wards, and gave me files and a small vice, which I fixed on my bed; and as soon as my tools were in readiness, I began my work in presence of my hostess, who, seeing that I was perfectly conversant with the business, complimented me on my skill; and what she most admired was the expedition of my work; for in fact, in less than four hours, I had perfected a most workmanlike key, which I tried, and it fitted most accurately. A few touches of the file completed the instrument; and, like the rest, I had the means of unobstructed entrance whenever I wished to visit the house.

I was Madame Noel's boarder; and, after dinner, I told her I was inclined to take a turn in the dusk, that I might find whether "a job" I contemplated was yet feasible, and she approved the suggestion, at the same time recommending me to use all caution. "That

thief of a Vidocq," she observed, "is a thorn in one's path; mind him; and, if I were you, before I made any attempts, I would wait until my feet were well."

"I shall not go far," I replied; "nor stay away long." This assurance of a speedy return seemed to quiet her fears.

"Well, then, go," she said; and I went out limping.

So far all succeeded to my most sanguine wishes; it was impossible to stand better with Mother Noel; but, by remaining in her house, who would guarantee that I should not be knocked on the head? Might not two or three galley-slaves arrive together, recognize me, and attack me? Then farewell to all my plottings; and it was incumbent, that, without losing the fruit of my friendship with Mother Noel, I should prepare myself for the contingent danger. It would have been the height of imprudence to have given her cause to think that I had any motives for avoiding contact with her guests, and I consequently endeavored so to lead her on, that she should herself suggest to me the necessity of quitting her house; that is, that she should advise me no longer to think of sleeping in her domicile.

I had observed that Madame Noel was very intimate with a fruitseller who lived in the house; and I sent to this woman one of my agents named Manceau, whom I charged to ask her secretly, and yet with a want of skill, for some accounts of Madame Noel. I had dictated the questions, and was the more certain that the fruit-woman would not fail to communicate the particulars, as I had desired my man to beg her to observe secrecy.

The event proved that I was not deceived; no sooner had my agent fulfilled his mission, than the fruit-woman hastened to Madame Noel with an account of what had passed; who, in her turn, lost no time in telling me. On the look-out at the steps of the door of her officious neighbor, as soon as she saw me, she came to me, and, without further preface, desired me to follow her, which I did; and on reaching the Place des Victoires, she stopped, and looking about her to be assured that no one was in hearing, she told me what had passed. "So," said she, in conclusion, "you see, my poor Germain, that it would not be prudent for you to sleep at my house; you must even be cautious how you approach it by day."

Mother Noel had no idea that this circumstance, which she bewailed so greatly, was of my own planning; and, that I might remove all suspicion from her mind, I pretended to be more vexed at it than she was, and cursed and swore bitterly at that blackguard Vidocq, who would not leave us at peace. I deprecated the necessity to which I was reduced, of finding a shelter out of Paris, and took leave of Madame Noel, who, wishing me good luck and a speedy return, put a thirty-sous piece into my hand.

I knew that Desbois and Mongenet were expected; and I was also aware that there were comers and goers who visited the house, whether Madame Noel was there or not; and she was often absent, giving music-lessons in the city. It was important that I should know these gentry; and to achieve this, I disguised several of my auxiliaries, and stationed them at the corners of the street, where, mixing

with the errand-boys and messengers, their presence excited no suspicion.

These precautions taken, that I might testify all due appearance of fear, I allowed two days to pass before I again visited Madame Noel; and this period having elapsed, I went one evening to her house, accompanied by a young man, whom I introduced as the brother of a female with whom I had once lived: and who, having met me accidentally in Paris, had given me an asylum. This young man was a secret agent, but I took care to tell Mother Noel that he had my fullest confidence, and that she might consider him as my second self; and as he was not known to the spies, I had chosen him to be my messenger to her whenever I did not judge it prudent to show myself. "Henceforth," I added, "he will be our go-between, and will come every two or three days, that I may have information of you and your friends."

"I' faith," said Mother Noel, "you have lost a pleasure; for twenty minutes sooner, and you would have seen a lady of your acquaintance here."

"Ah! who was it?"

"Mongenet's sister."

"Oh! indeed; she has often seen me with her brother."

"Yes; when I mentioned you, she described you as exactly as possible:—'a lanky chap,' said she, 'with his nose always grimed with snuff.'"

Madame Noel deeply regretted that I had not arrived before Mongenet's sister had departed; but certainly not so much as I rejoiced at my narrow escape from an interview which would have destroyed all my projects; for if this woman knew Germain, she also knew Vidocq; and it was impossible that she could have mistaken one for the other, so great was the difference between us! Although I had altered my features so as to deceive, yet the resemblance which, in description, seemed exact, would not stand the test of a critical examination, and particularly the reminiscences of intimacy. Mother Noel then gave me a very useful warning, when she informed me that Mongenet's sister was a very frequent visitor at her house. From thenceforward I resolved that this female should never catch a glimpse of my countenance; and to avoid meeting with her, whenever I visited Madame Noel, I sent my pretended brother-in-law first, who, when she was not there, had instructions to let me know it by sticking a wafer on the window. At this signal I entered, and my aid-de-camp betook himself to his post in the neighborhood, to guard against any disagreeable surprise. Not very far distant were other auxiliaries, to whom I had confided Mother Noel's key, that they might come to my succor in case of danger; for, from one instant to another, I might fall suddenly among a gang of fugitives, or some of the galley-slaves might recognize and attack me, and then a blow of my fist against a square of glass in the window was the signal which was to denote my need of assistance, to equalize the contending parties.

Thus were my schemes concerted, and the finale was at hand. It was on Tuesday, and a letter from the men I was in quest of, announced their intended arrival on the Friday following; a day which I intended should be for them a black Friday. At the first dawn

I betook myself to wine-vaults in the vicinity; and, that they might have no motive for watching me, supposing, as was their custom, that they should traverse the street several times up and down before they entered Madame Noel's domicile, I first sent my pretended brother-in-law, who returned soon afterward, and told me that Mongenet's sister was not there, and that I might safely enter.

"You are not deceiving me?" said I to my agent, whose tone appeared altered and embarrassed, and fixing on him one of those looks which penetrated the very heart's core, I thought I observed one of those ill-suppressed contractions of the muscles of the face which accompany a premeditated lie; and then, quick as lightning, the thought came over me that I was betrayed—that my agent was a traitor. We were in a private room, and, without a moment's hesitation, I grasped his throat with violence, and told him, in presence of his comrades, that I was informed of his perfidy, and that if he did not instantly confess all, I would shoot him on the spot. Dismayed at my penetration and determined manner, he stammered out a few words of excuse, and, falling on his knees, confessed that he had discovered all to Mother Noel.

This baseness, had I not thus detected it, would probably have cost me my life, but I did not think of any personal resentment; it was only the interest of society which I cared for, and which I regretted to see wrecked when so near port. The traitor, Manceau, was put in confinement, and, young as he was, having many old offenses to expiate, was sent to Bicêtre, and then to the Isle of Oleron, where he terminated his career. It may be conjectured that the fugitives did not return to the Rue Ticquetonne; but they were, notwithstanding, apprehended a short time afterward.

Mother Noel did not forgive the trick I had played her; and, to satisfy her revenge, she, one day, had all her goods taken away; and when this had been effected, went out without closing her door, and returned, crying out that she had been robbed. The neighbors were made witnesses, a declaration was made before a commissary, and Mother Noel pointed me out as the thief; because, she said, I had a key of her apartments. The accusation was a grave one, and she was instantly sent to the préfecture of police, and the next day I received the information. My justification was not difficult, for the préfet as well as M. Henry, saw through the imposture; and we managed so well, that Mother Noel's property was discovered, proof was obtained of the falsity of the charge, and, to give her time for repentence, she was sentenced for six months to St. Lazarre. Such were the issue and the consequences of an enterprise, in which I had not failed to use all precaution; and I have often achieved success in affairs, in which arrangements had been made, not so skillfully concerted or so ably executed.

The Purloined Letter

At Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library, or book-closet, *au troisième, No.* 33, *Rue Dunôt, Faubourg, St. Germain.* For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence ; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening ; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt. I looked upon it therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G.'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

'If it is any point requiring reflection,' observed Dupin, as he forebore to enkindle the wick, 'we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark.'

'That is another of your odd notions,' said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling everything 'odd' that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of 'oddities.'

'Very true,' said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair.

'And what is the difficulty now?' I asked. 'Nothing more in the assassination way I hope?'

'O, no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is *very* simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves : but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively *odd.*'

'Simple and odd,' said Dupin.

'Why, yes ; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair *is* so simple, and yet baffles us altogether.'

'Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault,' said my friend.

'What nonsense you *do* talk!' replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

'Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain,' said Dupin.

'Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?'

'A little *too* self-evident.'

'Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!,' roared our visitor, profoundly amused, 'oh Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!'

'And what, after all, *is* the matter on hand?' I asked.

'Why, I will tell you,' replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. 'I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold, were it known that I confided it to any one.'

'Proceed,' said I.

'Or not,' said Dupin.

'Well, then; I have received personal information, from a very high quarter, that a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession.'

'How is this known?' asked Dupin.

'It is clearly inferred,' replied the Prefect, 'from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing *out* of the robber's possession;—that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it.'

'Be a little more explicit,' I said.

'Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable.' The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

'Still I do not quite understand,' said Dupin.

'No? Well; the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honour of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honour and peace are so jeopardized.'

'But this ascendancy,' I interposed, 'would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare—'

'The thief,' said G., 'is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal *boudoir*. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavour to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognizes the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the person-

age addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses, for some fifteen minutes, upon the public affairs. At length, in taking leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but, of course, dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage who stood at her elbow. The minister decamped ; leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table.'

'Here, then,' said Dupin to me, 'you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendancy complete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber.'

'Yes,' replied the Prefect ; 'and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me.'

'Than whom,' said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, 'no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined.'

'You flatter me,' replied the Prefect, 'but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained.'

'It is clear,' said I, 'as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the minister ; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs.'

'True,' said G. ; 'and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the minister's hotel, and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design.'

'But,' said I, 'you are quite *au fait* in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before.'

'O yes ; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D—— Hotel. My honour is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed.'

'But is it not possible,' I suggested, 'that the letter may be in possession of the minister, as it unquestionably is,

he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?'

'This is barely possible,' said Dupin. 'The present peculiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D—— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession.'

'Its susceptibility of being produced?' said I.

'That is to say, of being *destroyed*,' said Dupin.

'True,' I observed; 'the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the minister, we may consider that as out of the question.'

'Entirely,' said the Prefect. 'He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection.'

'You might have spared yourself this trouble,' said Dupin. 'D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings, as a matter of course.'

'Not *altogether* a fool,' said G., 'but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool.'

'True,' said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, 'although I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself.'

'Suppose you detail,' said I, 'the particulars of your search.'

'Why the fact is, we took our time, and we searched *everywhere*. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room; devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a *secret* drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is *so* plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops?'

'Why so?'

'Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way.'

'But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?' I asked.

'By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case, we were obliged to proceed without noise.'

'But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces *all* articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You

did not take to pieces all the chairs?'

'Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful miscroscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the glueing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection.'

'I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bedclothes, as well as the curtains and carpets.'

'That of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope as before.'

'The two houses adjoining!' I exclaimed; 'you must have had a great deal of trouble.'

'We had; but the reward offered is prodigious.'

'You include the *grounds* about the houses?'

'All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed.'

'You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?'

'Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of the police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-*cover*, with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most zealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the needles.'

'You explored the floors beneath the carpets?'

'Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope.'

'And the paper on the walls?'

'Yes.'

'You looked into the cellars?'

'We did.'

'Then,' I said 'you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is *not* upon the premises, as you suppose.'

'I fear you are right there,' said the Prefect. 'And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?'

'To make a thorough research of the premises.'

'That is absolutely needless,' replied G——. 'I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the Hotel.'

'I have no better advice to give you,' said Dupin. 'You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?'

'Oh yes!'—And here the Perfect, producing a memorandum-book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

In about a month afterwards he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said,—

'Well, but G——, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as overreaching the Minister?'

'Confound him, say I—yes; I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labour lost, as I knew it would be.'

'How much was the reward offered, did you say?' asked Dupin.

'Why, a very great deal—a *very* liberal reward—I don't like to say how much, precisely; but one thing I *will* say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual check for fifty thousand francs to any one who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done.'

'Why, yes,' said Dupin, drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, 'I really think, G——, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter. You might—do a little more. I think, eh?'

'How?—in what way?'

'Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter, eh? —puff, puff, puff. Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy!'

'No; hang Abernethy!

'To be sure! hang him and welcome. But, once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of sponging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

'"We will suppose" said the miser, "that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would *you* have directed him to take?"'

'"Take!" said Abernethy, "why, take *advice*, to be sure."'

'But,' said the Prefect, a little discomposed, '*I* am *perfectly* willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would *really* give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter.'

'In that case,' replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a checkbook, 'you may as well give me a check for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter.'

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared thunderstricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a check for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter

examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book ; then, unlocking an *escritoire*, took thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

'The Parisian police,' he said 'are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hotel D——; I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labours extended.'

'So far as his labours extended?' said I.

'Yes,' said Dupin. 'The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it.'

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

'The measures, then,' he continued, 'were good in their kind, and well executed ; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow, for the matter in hand ; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of "even and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing ; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example, an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hands, asks, "are they even or odd?" Our schoolboy replies, "odd," and loses ; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, "the simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second ; I will therefore guess odd:" —he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: "This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and, in the second, he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even;"—he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the schoolboy, whom

his fellows termed "lucky,"—what, in its last analysis, is it ?'

'It is merely,' I said, 'an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent.'

'It is,' said Dupin ; 'and, upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the *thorough* identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows: "When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression." This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucault, to La Bruyere. Machiavelli, and to Campanella.'

'And the identification,' I said, 'of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."

'For its practical value it depends upon this,' replied Dupin ; 'and the Prefect and his cohorts fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their *own* ideas of ingenuity ; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it. They are right in this much —that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of *the mass ;* but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations ; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency —by some extraordinary reward—they extend or aggravate their old modes of *practice,* without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D——, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration *of the application* of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter,—not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg—but, at least, in *some* out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg? And do you not see also, that such *recherché* nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions, and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this *recherché* manner,—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the

acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers ; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in the policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude,—the qualities in question have *never* been known to fail You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden anywhere within the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect—its discovery would have been a matter altogather beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified ; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool, because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets ; this the Prefect *feels ;* and he is merely guilty of a *non distributio medii* in thence inferring that all poets are fools.'

'But is this really the poet ?' I asked. 'There are two brothers, I know ; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister I believe has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician, and no poet.'

'You are mistaken ; I know him well ; he is both. As poet and mathematician, he would reason well ; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect.'

'You surprise me,' I said, 'by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as *the* reason *par excellence.*'

'"*Il y a à parier,*"' replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, '"*que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre.*" The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term "analysis" into application to alegbra. The French are the originators of this particular deception ; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then "analysis" conveys "algebra" about as much as, in Latin, "*ambitus*" implies "ambition," "*religio*" "religion," or "*homines honesti,*" a set of *honourable* men.'

'You have a quarrel on hand, I see,' said I, 'with some of the algebraists of Paris ; but proceed.'

'I dispute the availability. and thus the value, of that reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure* algebra, are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true

of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually *un*true that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails. In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united, equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation.* But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths,* through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant, in his very learned "Mythology," mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that "although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities." With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the "Pagan fables" *are* believed, and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory, as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that x^2+px was absolutely and unconditionally equal to q. Say to one of these gentlemen by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where x^2+px is *not* altogether equal to q, and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavour to knock you down.

'I mean t o say,' continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, 'that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as a courtier, too, and as a bold *intriguant.* Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary political modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as *ruses,* to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G——, in fact, did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary *nooks* of concealment. *He* could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets,

and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so *very* self-evident.'

'Yes,' said I, 'I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions.'

'The material world,' continued Dupin, 'abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some colour of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiæ*, for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent *momentum* is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again: have you ever noticed which of the street signs, over the shop-doors, are the most attractive of attention?'

'I have never given the matter a thought,' I said.

'There is a game of puzzles,' he resumed, 'which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of a town, river, state or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the overlargely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

'But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D——; upon the fact that the document must always have been *at hand*, if he intended to use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

'Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by acci-

dent, at the Ministerial hotel. I found D—— at home, yawning, lounging and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of *ennui*. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

'To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

'I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly, some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

'At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantel-piece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless, had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D—— cipher *very* conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D——, the minister, himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

'No sooner had I glanced at this letter, than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D—— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S—— family. Here, the address, to the Minister, was diminutive and feminine; there the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But, then, the *radicalness* of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt; the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of D——, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyperobtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

'I protracted my visit as long as possible, and, while I maintained a most animated discussion with the Minister, upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of the paper, I observed

them to be more *chafed* than seemed necessary. They presented the *broken* appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, redirected, and resealed. I bade the Minister good morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

'The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a terrified mob. D—— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime, I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a *fac-simile* (so far as regards externals), which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings—imitating the D—— cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread.

'The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behaviour of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay.'

'But what purpose had you,' I asked, 'in replacing the letter by a *fac-simile*? Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly, and departed?'

'D——,' replied Dupin, 'is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interests. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter, I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Averni;* but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum,* an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms "a certain personage," he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack.'

'How? did you put anything particular in it?'

'Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humouredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clue. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words—

'"—— ——Un dessein si funeste,
S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.

They are to be found in Crebillon's "Atrée".'

In Various Rôles

In the following reminiscences will frequently be mentioned a lady who played a great part in the annals of the police from 1848 to 1866. We will call her "Wanda von Chabert." Born in Galicia of German parents, and carefully brought up in every way, when only sixteen she married, from love, a rich and handsome officer of noble birth. The young couple, however, lived beyond their means, and when the husband died suddenly, two years after they were married, she was left anything but well off.

As Wanda had grown accustomed to luxury and amusement, a quiet life in her parents' house did not suit her any longer. Even while she was still in mourning for her husband, she allowed a Hungarian magnate to make love to her. She went off with him at a venture, and continued the same extravagant life which she had led when her husband was alive, of her own volition. At the end of two years, however, her lover left her in a town in North Italy, almost without means. She was thinking of going on the stage, when chance provided her with another resource, which enabled her to reassert her position in society. She became a secret police agent, and soon was one of their most valuable members. In addition to the proverbial charm and wit of a Polish woman, she also possessed high linguistic attainments, and spoke Polish, Russian, French, German, English, and Italian with almost equal fluency and correctness. Then she had that encyclopedic polish which impresses people much more than the most profound learning of the specialist. She was very attractive in appearance, and she knew how to set off her good looks by all the arts of dress and coquetry.

In addition to this, she was a woman of the world in the widest sense of the term; pleasure-loving, faithless, unstable; and therefore never in any danger of really losing her heart, and consequently her head. She used to change the place of her abode, according to

what she had to do. Sometimes she lived in Paris among the Polish emigrants, in order to find out what they were doing, and maintained intimate relations with the Tuileries and the Palais Royal at the same time; sometimes she went to London for a short time, or hurried off to Italy to watch the Hungarian exiles, only to reappear suddenly in Switzerland, or at one of the fashionable German watering-places.

In revolutionary circles, she was looked upon as an active member of the great League of Freedom, and diplomatists regarded her as an influential friend of Napoleon III.

She knew everyone, but especially those men whose names were to be met with every day in the journals, and she counted Victor Emmanuel, Rouher, Gladstone, and Gortschakoff among her friends as well as Mazzini, Kossuth, Garibaldi, Mieroslawsky, and Bakunin.

In the spring of 185— she was at Vevey on the lovely lake of Geneva, and went into raptures when talking to an old German diplomatist about the beauties of nature, and about Calame, Stifter, and Turgenev, whose "Diary of a Hunter" had just become fashionable. One day a man appeared at the *table d'hôte,* who excited unusual attention, and hers especially, so that there was nothing strange in her asking the proprietor of the hotel what his name was. She was told that he was a wealthy Brazilian, and that his name was Don Escovedo.

Whether it was an accident, or whether he responded to the interest which the young woman felt for him, at any rate she constanly met him wherever she went, whether taking a walk, or on the lake or looking at the newspapers in the reading-room. At last she was obliged to confess to herself that he was the handsomest man she had ever seen. Tall, slim, and yet muscular, the young, beardless Brazilian had a head which any woman might envy, features not only beautiful and noble, but also extremely delicate, dark eyes which possessed wonderful charm, and thick, auburn, curly hair, which completed the attractiveness and the strangeness of his appearance.

They soon became acquainted, through a Prussian officer whom the Brazilian had asked for an introduction to the beautiful Polish lady—for Frau von Chabert was taken for one in Vevey. She, cold and designing as she was, blushed when he stood before her for the first time; and when he gave her his arm, he could feel her hand tremble slightly on it. The same evening they went out riding together, the next he was lying at her feet, and on the third she was his. For four weeks the lovely Wanda and the Brazilian lived together as if they had been in Paradise, but he could not deceive her searching eyes any longer.

Her sharp and practiced eye had already discovered in him that indefinable something which makes a man appear a suspicious character. Any other woman would have been pained and horrified at such a discovery, but she found the strange consolation in it that her handsome adorer promised also to become a very interesting object for pursuit, and so she began systematically to watch the man who lay unsuspectingly at her feet.

She soon found out that he was no

conspirator; but she asked herself in vain whether she was to look for a common swindler, an impudent adventurer, or perhaps even a criminal in him. The day that she had foreseen soon came; the Brazilian's banker "unaccountably" had omitted to send him any money, and so he borrowed some of her. "So he is a male courtesan," she said to herself. The handsome man soon required money again, and she lent it to him again. Then at last he left suddenly and nobody knew where he had gone to; only this much, that he had left Vevey as the companion of an old but wealthy Wallachian lady. So this time clever Wanda was duped.

A year afterward she met the Brazilian unexpectedly at Lucca, with an insipid-looking, light-haired, thin Englishwoman on his arm. Wanda stood still and looked at him steadily; but he glanced at her quite indifferently; he did not choose to know her again.

The next morning, however, his valet brought her a letter from him, which contained the amount of his debt in Italian hundred-lire notes, accompanied by a very cold excuse. Wanda was satisfied, but she wished to find out who the lady was, in whose company she constantly saw Don Escovedo.

"Don Escovedo."

An Austrian count, who had a loud and silly laugh, said:

"Who has saddled you with that yarn? The lady is Lady Nitingsdale, and his name is Romanesco."

"Romanesco?"

"Yes, he is a rich Boyer from Moldavia, where he has extensive estates."

Romanesco ran a faro bank in his apartments, and certainly cheated, for he nearly always won; it was not long, therefore, before other people in good society at Lucca shared Madame von Chabert's suspicions, and, consequently, Romanesco thought it advisable to vanish as suddenly from Lucca as Escovedo had done from Vevey, and without leaving any more traces behind him.

Some time afterward Madame von Chabert was on the island of Heligoland, for the sea-bathing; and one day she saw Escovedo-Romanesco sitting opposite to her at the *table d'hôte,* in very animated conversation with a Russian lady; only his hair had turned black since she had seen him last. Evidently his light hair had become too compromising for him.

"The sea-water seems to have a very remarkable effect upon your hair," Wanda said to him spitefully in a whisper.

"Do you think so?" he replied, condescendingly.

"I fancy that at one time your hair was fair."

"You are mistaking me for somebody else," the Brazilian replied, quietly.

"I am not."

"For whom do you take me, pray?" he said with an insolent smile.

"For Don Escovedo."

"I am Count Dembizki from Valkynia," the former Brazilian said with a bow; "perhaps you would like to see my passport."

"Well, perhaps—"

And he had the impudence to show her his false passport.

A year afterward Wanda met Count Dembizki in Baden, near Vienna. His hair was still black, but he had a magnificent, full, black beard; he had be-

come a Greek prince, and his name was Anastasio Maurokordatos. She met him once in one of the side walks in the park, where he could not avoid her. "If it goes on like this," she called out to him in a mocking voice, "the next time I see you you will be king of some negro tribe or other."

This time, however, the Brazilian did not deny his identity; on the contrary, he surrendered at discretion, and implored her not to betray him. As she was not revengeful she pardoned him, after enjoying his terror for a time, and promised him that she would hold her tongue, as long as he did nothing contrary to the laws.

"First of all, I must beg you not to gamble."

"You have only to command; and we do not know each other in the future."

"I must certainly insist on that," she said maliciously.

The "Exotic Prince" had, however, made a conquest of the charming daughter of a wealthy Austrian count, and had cut out an excellent young officer, who was wooing her. The latter, in his despair, began to make love to Frau von Chabert, and at last told her he loved her. But she only laughed at him.

"You are very cruel," he stammered in confusion.

"I? What are you thinking about?" Wanda replied, still smiling; "all I mean is that you have directed your love to the wrong address, for Countess—"

"Do not speak of her; she is engaged to another man."

"As long as I choose to permit it," she said; "but what will you do if I bring her back to your arms? Will you still call me cruel?"

"Can you do this?" the young officer asked, in great excitement.

"Well supposing I can do it, what shall I be then?"

"An angel, whom I shall thank on my knees."

A few days later, the rivals met at a coffee-house; the Greek prince began to lie and boast, and the Austrian officer gave him the lie direct. In consequence, it was arranged that they should fight a duel with pistols next morning in a wood close to Baden. But as the officer was leaving the house with his seconds the next morning, a Police Commissary came up to him and begged him not to trouble himself any further about the matter, but another time to be more careful about accepting a challenge.

"What does it mean?" the officer asked, in some surprise.

"It means that this Maurokordatos is a dangerous swindler and adventurer, whom we have just taken into custody."

"He is not a prince?"

"No; a circus rider."

An hour later, the officer received a letter from the charming Countess, in which she humbly begged for pardon. The happy lover set off to go and see her immediately, but on the way a sudden thought struck him, and so he turned back in order to thank beautiful Wanda, as he had promised, on his knees.

The Four Just Men

THE killing of Bernard Slane was one of those mysteries which delight the press and worry the police. Mr. Slane was a rich stockbroker, a bachelor and a good fellow. He had dined at a Pall Mall club and, his car being in the hands of the makers, he took a taxicab and ordered the chauffeur to drive to his flat, in Albert Palace Mansions. The porter of the mansions had taken the elevator to the fifth floor at the time Mr. Slane arrived.

The first intimation that there was anything wrong was when the porter came down to find the taxi driver standing in the hall, and asked him what he wanted.

"I've just brought a gentleman here—Mr. Slane, who lives at Number Seven," said the driver. "He hadn't any change so he's gone in to get it."

This was quite likely, because Slane lived on the first floor and invariably used the stairs. They chatted together, the porter and the driver, for some five minutes, and then the porter undertook to go up and collect the money for the fare. Albert Palace Mansions differed from every other apartment house of its kind in that, on the first and the most expensive floor, there was one small flat consisting of four rooms which was occupied by Slane.

A light showed through the transom, but then it had been burning all the evening. The porter rang the bell and waited, rang it again, knocked, without, however, getting an answer. He returned to the cabman.

"He must have gone to sleep. How was he?" he asked.

By his question he meant to inquire whether the stockbroker was quite sober. It is the fact that Slane drank rather heavily, and had come home more than once in a condition which necessitated the help of the night porter to get him to bed.

The cabman, whose name was Reynolds, admitted as much as, and probably more than, was good for him. Again the porter attempted to get a reply from the flat, and, when this failed, he paid the cabman himself.

The porter was on duty all night, and made several journeys up and down his shaft. Through the open grille on the first floor he commanded a view of No. 7. His statement was that he saw nothing of Mr. Slane that night, that it was impossible for the stockbroker to have left the building without his seeing him.

At half-past five the next morning a policeman, patrolling Green Park, saw a man sitting huddled up on a garden chair. He was in evening dress, his attitude so suspicious that the policeman stepped over the rails and crossed the stretch of grass which intervened between the pathway and the chair which was placed near a clump of rho-

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dodendrons. He came up to the man, to find his fears justified. The man was dead; he had been terribly battered with some blunt instrument, and a search of the pockets revealed his identity as Bernard Slane.

Near the spot was an iron gateway set in the rails leading to the Mall, and the lock of this was discovered to be smashed. Detectives from Scotland Yard were at once on the spot; the porter of Albert Palace Mansions was questioned; and a call was sent round, asking the driver, Reynolds, to call at the Yard. He was there by twelve o'clock, but could throw no light on the mystery.

Reynolds was a respectable man without any record against him, and was a widower who lived over a garage near Dorset Square, Baker Street.

"A most amusing crime," said Leon Gonsalez, his elbows on the breakfast table, his head between his hands.

"Why amusing?" asked George.

Leon read on, his lips moving—a trick of his—as he devoured every printed line. After a while he leaned back in his chair and rubbed his eyes.

"It is amusing," he said, "because of the hotel bill that was found in the dead man's pocket."

He put his finger on a paragraph, and Manfred drew the paper toward him and read:

The police discovered in the right-hand pocket of the murdered man's overcoat a crimson-stained paper which proved to be a hotel bill, issued by the Plage Hotel, Ostend, on August 3, 1921. The bill was made out in the name of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbraham and was for 7,500 francs.

Manfred pushed the paper back.

"Isn't the mystery why this half-drunken man left his flat and went back to Green Park which is some considerable distance from Albert Palace Mansions?" he asked.

Leon, who was staring blankly at the farther wall, shook his head slowly; and then, in his characteristic way, went off at a tangent:

"This new law prohibiting the publication of details in divorce cases is something of a bore," he said. "Fortunately, the date is 1921, and the circumstances which surrounded the visit of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbraham to the Plage would have been given the fullest publicity if the case had come into court."

"Do you suspect a murder of revenge?"

Leon shrugged his shoulders and changed the subject.

George Manfred used to say that Leon had the most amazing pigeonholed mind that it had been his fortune to meet with. Very seldom, indeed, did he have to consult the voluminous notes and data he had collected during his life, and which made one room in that little house uninhabitable.

There was a man at Scotland Yard, Inspector Meadows, who was on the friendliest terms with the three. It was his practice to smoke a pipe, indeed many pipes, of evenings in the little Curzon Street house. He came that night, rather full of the Slane mystery.

"Slane was a pretty rapid sort," he said. "From the evidence that was

found in his house, it is clear that he was the one man in London who ought not to be a bachelor if about two dozen women had their rights! By the way, we've traced Mr. and Mrs. Wilbraham. Wilbraham was, of course, Slane. The lady isn't so easy to find; one of his pick-ups, I suppose."

"And yet the only girl he was willing to marry," said Gonsalez.

"How did you know that?" asked the startled detective.

Leon chuckled.

"The bill was obviously sent to give the husband evidence. The husband was willing to give his wife another chance so he did not divorce her. Now tell me"—he leaned forward over the table and beamed on the detective—"when the cabman drew up before the door of Albert Palace Mansions, did Slane immediately alight? I can tell you he didn't."

"You've been making inquiries," said the other suspiciously. "No, he waited there. The cabman, being a tactful individual, thought it best to keep him inside until the people who were in the hall had gone up in the lift—which is visible from the door."

"Exactly. Was it the cabman's idea or Slane's?"

"The cabman's," said Meadows. "Slane was half asleep when the cabman pulled him out."

"One more question: When the elevator man took this party to the fifth floor, did he come down immediately?"

The inspector shook his head.

"No, he stayed up there talking to the tenants. He heard Slane's door slam, and that was the first intimation he had that somebody had come in."

Leon jerked back into his chair, a delighted smile on his face.

"What do you think, Raymond?" He addressed the saturnine Poiccart.

"What do you think?" said the other.

Meadows looked from Poiccart to Gonsalez.

"Have you any theory as to why Slane went out again?"

"He didn't go out again," said the two men in unison.

Meadows caught George Manfred's smiling eyes.

"They're trying to mystify you, Meadows, but what they say is true. Obviously, he did not go out again."

He rose and stretched himself.

"I'm going to bed; and I'd like to bet you fifty pounds that Leon finds the murderer to-morrow, though I won't swear that he will hand him over to Scotland Yard."

At eight o'clock next morning, when, with a cigarette in his mouth, Reynolds, the taxi driver, was making a final inspection of his cab before taking it out for the day, Leon Gonsalez walked into the mews.

Reynolds was a man of forty, a quiet, good-looking fellow, refined of speech and courteous in a very pleasing way.

"You're not another detective, are you?" he asked, smiling ruefully. "I've answered as many foolish questions as I care to answer."

"Is this your own cab?" Leon nodded to the shining machine.

"Yes, that's mine," said the driver. "Cab owning is not the gold mine some people think it is. And if you happen to get mixed up in a case like this, your takings fall fifty per cent."

Very briefly Leon explained his position.

"The Triangle Agency—oh, yes, I remember: you're The Four Just Men, aren't you? Good heavens! Scotland Yard haven't put you on the job?"

"I'm on the job for my own amusement," said Leon, giving smile for smile. "There are one or two matters which weren't quite clear to me, and I wondered if you would mind telling me something that the police do not seem to know."

The man hesitated, a moment or two, and then:

"Come up to my room," he said, and led the way up the narrow stairs.

The room was surprisingly well furnished. There were one or two old pieces, Leon noticed, which must have been worth a lot of money. On a gate-legged table in the center of the room was a leather hat box, and near the table a suit case. The cabman must have noticed his eyes rest on these, for he said quickly:

"They belong to a customer of mine. I'm taking them to the station."

From where he stood, Leon could see they were addressed to the Tetley cloakroom to be called for; he made no comment on this, but his observation evidently disconcerted his host, for his manner changed.

"Now, Mr. Gonsalez, I'm a working man, so I'm afraid I can't give you very much time. What is it you want to know?"

"I particularly wish to know," said Leon, "whether the day you brought Slane to his house had been a very busy one for you?"

"It was fairly profitable," said the other. "I have already given the police an account of my fares, including the hospital case—but I suppose you know that."

"Which hospital case was this?"

The man hesitated.

"I don't want you to think I'm boasting about doing a thing like that—it was just humanity. A woman was knocked down by a bus in Baker Street: I picked her up and took her to the hospital."

"Was she badly hurt?"

"She died." His voice was curt.

Leon looked at him thoughtfully. Again his eyes roved to the suit case.

"Thank you," he said. "Will you come to Curzon Street to-night at nine o'clock? Here's my address." He took a card from his pocket.

"Why?" There was a note of defiance in the voice.

"Because I want to ask you something that I think you'll be glad to answer," said Leon.

His big car was waiting at the end of the mews, and he set it flying in the direction of the Walmer Street hospital. He learned there no more than he expected, and returned to Curzon Street, a very silent and uninformative man.

At nine o'clock that night came Reynolds, and for an hour he and Leon Gonsalez were closeted together in the little room downstairs. Happily, Meadows did not consider it necessary to call. It was not until a week afterward that he came with a piece of information that surprised only himself.

"It was rather a rum thing: that cabman who took Slane back to his flat has disappeared; sold his taxicab and cleared out. There's nothing to asso-

ciate him with the murder or I should get a warrant for him. He has been straightforward about it from the very first."

Manfred politely agreed. Poiccart was staringly vacant. Leon Gonsalez yawned and was frankly bored with all mysteries.

"It's very curious," said Gonsalez, when he condescended to tell the full story, "that the police never troubled to investigate Slane's life at Tetley. He had a big house there for some years. If they had, they couldn't have failed to hear the story of young Doctor Grain and his beautiful wife who ran away from him. She and Slane disappeared together; and, of course, he was passionately fond of her and was ready to marry her. But then, Slane was the type who was passionately fond of peope for about three months, and, unless the marriage can be arranged instantly, the unfortunate girl had very little chance of retrieving her character.

"The doctor offered to take his wife back, but she refused, and disappeared out of his life. He gave up the practice of medicine, came to London, invested his savings in a small garage, and went broke, as all garage proprietors do unless they're backed with good capital. Then, having to decide whether he'd go back to the practice of medicine and pick up all that he'd lost in the years he'd been trying to forget his wife, he chose what to him was the less strenuous profession of cab driver. I know another man who did exactly the same thing. I will tell you about him one of these days.

"He never saw his wife again, though he frequenty saw Slane. Reynolds, or Grain, as I will call him, had shaved off his mustache and generally altered his appearance, and Slane never recognized him. It became an obsession of Grain's to follow his enemy about, to learn of his movements, his habits. The one habit he did discover, and which proved to be Slane's undoing, was his practice of dining at the Real Club in Pall Mall every Wednesday evening and of leaving the club at eleven thirty on those occasions.

"He put his discovery to no use, nor did he expect he would, until the night of the murder. He was driving somewhere in the northwest district when he saw a woman knocked down by a motor bus, and he himself nearly ran over the prostrate figure. Stopping his cab, he jumped down and, to his horror, as he picked her up, he found himself gazing into the emaciated face of his wife. He lifted her into the cab and drove to the nearest hospital. It was while they were in the waiting room, before the house surgeon's arrival, that the dying woman told him, in a few broken, half-delirious words, the story of her downward progress. She was dead before they got her onto the operating table—mercifully, as it proved.

"I knew all this before I went to the hospital and found that some unknown person had decided that she should be buried at Tetley and had made the most lavish arrangements for her removal. I guessed it before I saw Grain's suit case packed ready for that tragedy. He left the hospital, a man mad with hate. It was raining heavily. He crawled down Pall Mall, and luck was with him, for, just as the porter came out to find

an empty taxi, Grain pulled up his machine before the door.

"On the pretext of a tire burst he stopped in the Mall, forced open one of the gates that led to the park, and waited until no pedestrian was in sight before he dragged the half-drunken man into the gardens. He was sober enough before Grain finished his story. Grain swears that he gave him the chance of his life, but Slane pulled a gun on him, and he had to kill him in self-defense. That may or may not be true.

"He never lost his nerve. Reaching his cab without observation, he drove to Albert Palace Mansions, waited until the lift had risen, and then ran up the stairs. He had taken Slane's bunch of keys, and on the way had selected that which he knew would open the door. His first intention was to search the flat for everything that betrayed the man's association with his wife; but he heard the porter up above saying good night and, slamming the door, raced downstairs in time to be there when the man reached the ground floor."

"We're not telling the police this, of course?" sand Manfred gravely.

Poiccart at the other end of the table burst into a loud guffaw.

"It's so good a story that the police would never believe it," he said.

The Three Rings

SALADIN was so brave and great a man, that he had raised himself from an inconsiderable person to be Sultan of Babylon, and had gained many victories over both the Turkish and Christian princes. This monarch, having in divers wars, and by many extraordinary expenses, run through all his treasure, some urgent occasion fell out, that he wanted a large sum of money. Not knowing which way he might raise enough to answer his necessities, he at last called to mind a rich Jew of Alexandria, named Melchizedeck, who let out money to interest. Him he believed to have wherewithal to serve him; but then he was so covetous, that he would never do it willingly, and he was unwilling to force him. But as necessity has no law, after much thinking which way the matter might best be effected, he at last resolved to use force under some colour of reason. He therefore sent for, and received him in a most gracious manner, and making him sit down, he thus addressed him: "Honest man, I hear from divers persons that thou art very wise, and knowing in religious matters; wherefore I would gladly know from thee which religion thou judgest to be the true one, viz., the Jewish, the Mahometan, or the Christian?" The Jew (truly a wise man) found that Saladin had a mind to trap him; and perceiving that he must gain his point should he prefer any one religion, after considering a little how best to avoid the snare, his invention at

last supplied him with the following answer: "The question which your Highness has proposed is very curious; and, that I may give you my sentiments, I must beg leave to tell a short story.

"I remember often to have heard of a great and rich man, who, among his most rare and precious jewels, had a ring of exceeding great beauty and value; and being proud of possessing a thing of such worth, and desirous that it should continue for ever in his family, he declared, by will, that to which soever of his sons he should give this ring, him he designed for his heir, and that he should be respected as the head of the family. That son to whom the ring was given, made the same law with respect to his descendants, and the ring passed from one to another in a long succession, till it came to a person who had three sons, all virtuous and dutiful to their father, and all equally beloved by him. And the young men, knowing what depended upon the ring, and ambitious of superiority, began to entreat their father, who was now growing old, every one for himself, that he would give the ring to him. The good man, equally fond of all, was at a loss which to prefer; and as he had promised all, and being willing to satisfy all, privately got an artist to make two others, which were so like the first, that he himself scarcely knew the true one! and at his death gave one privately to each of his sons. They afterwards all claimed the honour and estate, each disputing them with his brothers, and producing his ring; and the rings were found so much alike, that the true one could not be distinguished. To law then they went, which should succeed, nor is that yet decided. And thus it has happened, my lord, with regard to the three laws given by God the Father, concerning which you proposed your question: every one believes he is the true heir of God, has His law, and obeys His commandments; but which is in the right is uncertain in like manner as of the rings."

Saladin perceived that he had escaped the net which was spread for him; he therefore resolved to discover his necessity to him, to see if he would lend him money, telling him at the same time what he designed to have done, had not his discreet answer prevented him. The Jew freely supplied him with what he wanted, Saladin afterwards paid him with a great deal of honour, made him large presents, besides maintaining him nobly at his court, and was his friend as long as he lived.

The Silent Bullet

"Detectives in fiction nearly always make a great mistake," said Kennedy one evening after a conversation on crime and science. "They almost invariably antagonize the regular detective force. Now in real life that's impossible—it's fatal."

"Yes," I agreed, looking up from reading an account of the failure of a large Wall Street brokerage house, Kerr Parker & Co., and the peculiar suicide of Kerr Parker. "Yes, it's impossible, just as it is impossible for the regular detectives to antagonize the newspapers. Scotland Yard found that out in the Crippen case."

"My idea of the thing, Jameson," continued Kennedy, "is that the professor of criminal science ought to work with, not against, the regular detectives. They're all right. They're indispensable, of course. Half the secret of success nowadays is organization. The professor of criminal science should be merely what the professor in a technical school often is—a sort of consulting engineer. For instance, I believe that organization plus science would go far toward clearing up that Wall Street case I see you are reading."

I expressed some doubt as to whether the regular police were enlightened enough to take that view of it.

"Some of them are," he replied. "Yesterday the chief of police in a Western city sent a man East to see me about the Price murder—you know the case?"

Indeed I did. A wealthy banker of the town had been murdered on the road to the golf club, no one knew why or by whom. Every clue had proved fruitless, and the list of suspects was itself so long and so impossible as to seem most discouraging.

"He sent me a piece of a torn handkerchief with a deep blood-stain on it," pursued Kennedy. "He said it clearly didn't belong to the murdered man, that it indicated that the murderer had himself been wounded in the tussle, but as yet it had proved utterly valueless as a clue. Would I see what I could make of it?

"After his man had told me the story I had a feeling that the murder was committed by either a Sicilian laborer on the links or a negro waiter at the club. Well, to make a short story shorter, I decided to test the blood-stain. Probably you didn't know it, but the Carnegie Institution has just published a minute, careful, and dry study of the blood of human beings and of animals. In fact, they have been able to reclassify the whole animal kingdom on this basis, and have made some most surprising additions to our knowledge of evolution. Now I don't propose to bore you with the details of the tests, but one of the things they showed was that

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the blood of a certain branch of the human race gives a reaction much like the blood of a certain group of monkeys, the chimpanzees, while the blood of another branch gives a reaction like that of the gorilla. Of course there's lots more to it, but this is all that need concern us now.

"I tried the tests. The blood on the handkerchief conformed strictly to the latter test. Now the gorilla was, of course, out of the question—this was no *Rue Morgue* murder. Therefore it was the negro waiter."

"But," I interrupted, "the negro offered a perfect alibi at the start, and—"

"No buts, Walter. Here's a telegram I received at dinner: 'Congratulations. Confronted Jackson your evidence as wired. Confessed.'"

"Well, Craig, I take off my hat to you," I exclaimed. "Next you'll be solving this Kerr Parker case for sure."

"I would take a hand in it if they'd let me," said he simply.

That night, without saying anything, I sauntered down to the imposing new police building amid the squalor of Center Street. They were very busy at headquarters, but having once had that assignment for the *Star,* I had no trouble in getting in. Inspector Barney O'Connor of the Central Office carefully shifted a cigar from corner to corner of his mouth as I poured forth my suggestion to him.

"Well, Jameson," he said at length, "do you think this professor fellow is the goods?"

I didn't mince matters in my opinion of Kennedy. I told him of the Price case and showed him a copy of the telegram. That settled it.

"Can you bring him down here tonight?" he asked quickly.

I reached for the telephone, found Craig in his laboratory finally, and in less than an hour he was in the office.

"This is a most baffling case, Professor Kennedy, this case of Kerr Parker," said the inspector, launching at once into his subject. "Here is a broker heavily interested in Mexican rubber. It looks like a good thing—plantations right in the same territory as those of the Rubber Trust. Now in addition to that he is branching out into coastwise steamship lines; another man associated with him is heavily engaged in a railway scheme for the United States down into Mexico. Altogether the steamships and railroads are tapping rubber, oil, copper, and I don't know what other regions. Here in New York they have been pyramiding stocks, borrowing money from two trust companies which they control. It's a lovely scheme—you've read about it, I suppose. Also you've read that it comes into competition with a certain group of capitalists whom we will call 'the System.'

"Well, this depression in the market comes along. At once rumors are spread about the weakness of the trust companies; runs start on both of them. The System—you know them—make a great show of supporting the market. Yet the runs continue. God knows whether they will spread or the trust companies stand up under it to-morrow after what happened to-day. It was a good thing the market was closed when it happened.

"Kerr Parker was surrounded by a group of people who were in his schemes with him. They are holding a council of war in the director's room. Suddenly Parker rises, staggers toward the win-

dow, falls, and is dead before a doctor can get to him. Every effort is made to keep the thing quiet. It is given out that he committed suicide. The papers don't seem to accept the suicide theory, however. Neither do we. The coroner, who is working with us, has kept his mouth shut so far, and will say nothing till the inquest. For, Professor Kennedy, my first man on the spot found that—Kerr—Parker—was—murdered.

"Now here comes the amazing part of the story. The doors to the offices on both sides were open at the time. There were lots of people in each office. There was the usual click of typewriters, and the buzz of the ticker, and the hum of conversation. We have any number of witnesses of the whole affair, but as far as any of them knows no shot was fired, no smoke was seen, no noise was heard, nor was any weapon found. Yet here on my desk is a thirty-two calibre bullet. The coroner's physician probed it out of Parker's neck this afternoon and turned it over to us."

Kennedy reached for the bullet, and turned it thoughtfully in his fingers for a moment. One side of it had apparently struck a bone in the neck of the murdered man, and was flattened. The other side was still perfectly smooth. With his inevitable magnifying-glass he scrutinized the bullet on every side. I watched his face anxiously, and I could see that he was very intent and very excited.

"Extraordinary, most extraordinary," he said to himself as he turned it over and over. "Where did you say this bullet struck?"

"In the fleshy part of the neck, quite a little back of and below his ear and just above his collar. There wasn't much bleeding. I think it must have struck the base of his brain."

"It didn't strike his collar or hair?"

"No," replied the inspector.

"Inspector, I think we shall be able to put our hand on the murderer—I think we can get a conviction, sir, on the evidence that I shall get from this bullet in my laboratory."

"That's pretty much like a story-book," drawled the inspector incredulously, shaking his head.

"Perhaps," smiled Kennedy. "But there will still be plenty of work for the police to do, too. I've only got a clue to the murderer. It will tax the whole organization to follow it up, believe me. Now, Inspector, can you spare the time to go down to Parker's office and take me over the ground? No doubt we can develop something else there."

"Sure," answered O'Connor, and within five minutes we were hurrying down town in one of the department automobiles.

We found the office under guard of one of the Central Office men, while in the outside office Parker's confidential clerk and a few assistants were still at work in a subdued and awed manner. Men were working in many other Wall Street offices that night during the panic, but in none was there more reason for it than here. Later I learned that it was the quiet tenacity of this confidenial clerk that saved even as much of Parker's estate as was saved for his widow—little enough it was, too. What he saved for the clients of the firm no one will ever know. Somehow or other I liked John Downey, the clerk, from the moment I was introduced to him. He seemed to me, at least, to be the typical confidential clerk who would

carry a secret worth millions and keep it.

The officer in charge touched his hat to the inspector, and Downey hastened to put himself at our service. It was plain that the murder had completely mystified him, and that he was as anxious as we were to get at the bottom of it.

"Mr. Downey," began Kennedy. "I understand you were present when this sad event took place."

"Yes, sir, sitting right here at the directors' table," he replied, taking a chair, "like this."

"Now can you recollect just how Mr. Parker acted when he was shot? Could you—er—could you take his place and show us just how it happened?"

"Yes, sir," said Downey. "He was sitting here at the head of the table. Mr. Bruce, who is the 'Co.' of the firm, had been sitting here at his right; I was at the left. The inspector has a list of all the others present. That door to the right was open, and Mrs. Parker and some other ladies were in the room—"

"Mrs. Parker?" broke in Kennedy.

"Yes. Like a good many brokerage firms we have a ladies' room. Many ladies are among our clients. We make a point of catering to them. At that time I recollect the door was open—all the doors were open. It was not a secret meeting. Mr. Bruce had just gone into the ladies' department, I think to ask some of them to stand by the firm—he was an artist at smoothing over the fears of customers, particularly women. Just before he went in I had seen the ladies go in a group toward the far end of the room—to look down at the line of depositors on the street, which reached around the corner from one of the trust companies, I thought. I was making a note of an order to send into the outside office there on the left, and had just pushed this button here under the table to call a boy to carry it. Mr. Parker had just received a letter by special delivery, and seemed considerably puzzled over it. No, I don't know what it was about. Of a sudden I saw him start in his chair, rise up unsteadily, clap his hand on the back of his head, stagger across the floor—like this—and fall here."

"Then what happened?"

"Why, I rushed to pick him up. Everything was confusion. I recall someone behind me saying, 'Here, boy, take all these papers off the table and carry them into my office before they get lost in the excitement.' I think it was Bruce's voice. The next moment I heard someone say, 'Stand back, Mrs. Parker has fainted.' But I didn't pay much attention, for I was calling to someone not to get a doctor over the telephone, but to go down to the fifth floor where one has an office. I made Mr. Parker as comfortable as I could. There wasn't much I could do. He seemed to want to say something to me, but he couldn't talk. He was paralyzed, at least his throat was. But I did manage to make out finally what sounded to me like, 'Tell her I don't believe the scandal, I don't believe it.' But before he could say whom to tell he had again become unconscious, and by the time the doctor arrived he was dead. I guess you know everything else as well as I do."

"You didn't hear the shot fired from any particular direction?" asked Kennedy.

"No, sir."

"Well, where do you think it came from?"

"That's what puzzles me, sir. The only thing I can figure out is that it was fired from the outside office—perhaps by some customer who had lost money and sought revenge. But no one out there heard it either, any more than they did in the directors' room or the ladies' department."

"About that message," asked Kennedy, ignoring what to me seemed to be the most important feature of the case, the mystery of the silent bullet. "Didn't you see it after all was over?"

"No, sir; in fact I had forgotten about it till this moment when you asked me to reconstruct the circumstances exactly. No, sir, I don't know a thing about it. I can't say it impressed itself on my mind at the time, either."

"What did Mrs. Parker do when she came to?"

"Oh, she cried as I have never seen a woman cry before. He was dead by that time, of course. Mr. Bruce and I saw her down in the elevator to her car. In fact, the doctor, who had arrived, said that the sooner she was taken home the better she would be. She was quite hysterical."

"Did she say anything that you remember?"

Downey hesitated.

"Out with it, Downey," said the inspector. "What did she say as she was going down in the elevator?"

"Nothing."

"Tell us. I'll arrest you if you don't."

"Nothing about the murder, on my honor," protested Downey.

Kennedy leaned over suddenly and shot a remark at him, "Then it was about the note."

Downey was surprised, but not quickly enough. Still he seemed to be considering something, and in a moment he said:

"I don't know what it was about, but I feel it is my duty, after all, to tell you. I heard her say, 'I wonder if he knew.' "

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing else."

"What happened after you came back?"

"We entered the ladies' department. No one was there. A woman's automobile-coat was thrown over a chair in a heap. Mr. Bruce picked it up. 'It's Mrs. Parker's,' he said. He wrapped it up hastily, and rang for a messenger."

"Where did he send it?"

"To Mrs. Parker, I suppose. I didn't hear the address."

We next went over the whole suite of offices, conducted by Mr. Downey. I noted how carefully Kennedy looked into the directors' room through the open door from the ladies' department. He stood at such an angle that had he been the assassin he could scarcely have been seen except by those sitting immediately next to Mr. Parker at the directors' table. The street windows were directly in front of him, and back of him was the chair on which the motor-coat had been found.

In Parker's own office we spent some time, as well as in Bruce's. Kennedy made a search for the note, but finding nothing in either office, turned out the contents of Bruce's scrap-basket. There didn't seem to be anything in it to interest him, however, even after he had pieced several torn bits of scraps together with much difficulty, and he was about to turn the papers back again,

when he noticed something sticking to the side of the basket. It looked like a mass of wet paper, and that was precisely what it was.

"That's queer," said Kennedy, picking it loose. Then he wrapped it up carefully and put it in his pocket. "Inspector, can you lend me one of your men for a couple of days?" he asked, as we were preparing to leave. "I shall want to send him out of town to-night, and shall probably need his services when he gets back."

"Very well. Riley will be just the fellow. We'll go back to headquarters, and I'll put him under your orders."

It was not until late in the following day that I saw Kennedy again. It had been a busy day on the *Star*. We had gone to work that morning expecting to see the financial heavens fall. But just about five minutes to ten, before the Stock Exchange opened, the news came in over the wire from our financial man on Broad Street: "The System has forced James Bruce, partner of Kerr Parker, the dead banker, to sell his railroad, steamship, and rubber holdings to it. On this condition it promises unlimited support to the market."

"Forced!" muttered the managing editor, as he waited on the office 'phone to get the composing-room, so as to hurry up the few lines in red ink on the first page and beat our rivals on the streets with the first extras. "Why, he's been working to bring that about for the past two weeks. What that System doesn't control isn't worth having—it edits the news before our men get it, and as for grist for the divorce courts, and tragedies, well—Hello, Jenkins, yes, a special extra. Change the big heads—copy is on the way up—rush it."

"So you think this Parker case is a mess?" I asked.

"I know it. That's a pretty swift bunch of females that have been speculating at Kerr Parker & Co.'s. I understand there's one Titian-haired young lady—who, by the way, has at least one husband who hasn't yet been divorced—who is a sort of ringleader, though she rarely goes personally to her broker's office. She's one of those uptown plungers, and the story is that she has a whole string of scalps of alleged Sunday-school superintendents at her belt. She can make Bruce do pretty nearly anything, they say. He's the latest conquest. I got the story on pretty good authority, but until I verified the names, dates and places, of course I wouldn't dare print a line of it. The story goes that her husband is a hanger-on of the System, and that she's been working in their interest, too. That was why he was so complacent over the whole affair. They put her up to capturing Bruce, and after she had acquired an influence over him they worked it so that she made him make love to Mrs. Parker. It's a long story, but that isn't all of it. The point was, you see, that by this devious route they hoped to worm out of Mrs. Parker some inside information about Parker's rubber schemes, which he hadn't divulged even to his partners in business. It was a deep and carefully planned plot, and some of the conspirators were pretty deeply in the mire, I guess. I wish I'd had all the facts about who this red-haired Machiavelli was—what a piece of muckraking it would have made! Oh, here comes the rest of the news story over the wire. By Jove, it is said on good authority that Bruce will be taken in as one of the board of

directors. What do you think of that?"

So that was how the wind lay—Bruce making love to Mrs. Parker and she presumably betraying her husband's secrets. I thought I saw it all: the note from somebody exposing the scheme, Parker's incredulity, Bruce sitting by him and catching sight of the note, his hurrying out into the ladies' department, and then the shot. But who fired it? After all, I had only picked up another clue.

Kennedy was not at the apartment at dinner, and an inquiry at the laboratory was fruitless also. So I sat down to fidget for a while. Pretty soon the buzzer on the door sounded, and I opened it to find a messenger-boy with a large brown paper parcel.

"Is Mr. Bruce here?" he asked.

"Why, no, he doesn't—" then I checked myself and added: "He will be here presently. You can leave the bundle."

"Well, this is the parcel he telephoned for. His valet told me to tell him that they had a hard time to find it, but he guesses it's all right. The charges are forty cents. Sign here."

I signed the book, feeling like a thief, and the boy departed. What it all meant I could not guess.

Just then I heard a key in the lock, and Kennedy came in.

"Is your name Bruce?" I asked.

"Why?" he replied eagerly. "Has anything come?"

I pointed to the package. Kennedy made a dive for it and unwrapped it. It was a woman's pongee automobile-coat. He held it up to the light. The pocket on the right-hand side was scorched and burned, and a hole was torn clean through it. I gasped when the full significance of it dawned on me.

"How did you get it?" I exclaimed at last in surprise.

"That's where organization comes in," said Kennedy. "The police at my request went over every messenger call from Parker's office that afternoon, and traced every one of them up. At last they found one that led to Bruce's apartment. None of them led to Mrs. Parker's home. The rest were all business calls and satisfactorily accounted for. I reasoned that this was the one that involved the disappearance of the automobile-coat. It was a chance worth taking, so I got Downey to call up Bruce's valet. The valet of course recognized Downey's voice and suspected nothing. Downey assumed to know all about the coat in the package received yesterday. He asked to have it sent up here. I see the scheme worked."

"But, Kennedy, do you think she—" I stopped, speechless, looking at the scorched coat.

"Nothing to say—yet," he replied laconically. "But if you could tell me anything about that note Parker received I'd thank you."

I related what our managing editor had said that morning. Kennedy only raised his eyebrows a fraction of an inch.

"I had guessed something of that sort," he said merely. "I'm glad to find it confirmed even by hearsay evidence. This red-haired young lady interests me. Not a very definite description, but better than nothing at all. I wonder who she is. Ah, well, what do you say to a stroll down the White Way before I go to my laboratory? I'd like a breath of air to relax my mind."

We had got no further than the first theatre when Kennedy slapped me on

the back. "By George, Jameson, she's an actress, of course."

"Who is? What's the matter with you, Kennedy? Are you crazy?"

"The red-haired person—she must be an actress. Don't you remember the auburn-haired leading lady in the 'Follies'—the girl who sings that song about 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary'? Her stage name, you know, is Phœbe La Neige. Well, if it's she who is concerned in this case I don't think she'll be playing to-night. Let's inquire at the box-office."

She wasn't playing, but just what it had to do with anything in particular I couldn't see, and I said as much.

"Why, Walter, you'd never do as a detective. You lack intuition. Sometimes I think I haven't quite enough of it, either. Why didn't I think of that sooner? Don't you know she is the wife of Adolphus Hesse, the most inveterate gambler in stocks in the System? Why, I had only to put two and two together and the whole thing flashed on me in an instant. Isn't it a good hypothesis that she is the red-haired woman in the case, the tool of the System in which her husband is so heavily involved? I'll have to add her to my list of suspects."

"Why, you don't think she did the shooting?" I asked, half hoping, I must admit, for an assenting nod from him.

"Well," he answered dryly, "one shouldn't let any preconceived hypothesis stand between him and the truth. I've made a guess at the whole thing already. It may or it may not be right. Anyhow she will fit into it. And if it's not right, I've got to be prepared to make a new guess, that's all."

When we reached the laboratory on our return, the inspector's man Riley was there, waiting impatiently for Kennedy.

"What luck?" asked Kennedy.

"I've got a list of purchasers of that kind of revolver," he said. "We have been to every sporting-goods and arms-store in the city which bought them from the factory, and I could lay my hands on pretty nearly every one of the weapons in twenty-four hours — provided, of course, they haven't been secreted or destroyed."

"Pretty nearly all isn't good enough," said Kennedy. "It will have to be all, unless—"

"*That* name is in the list," whispered Riley hoarsely.

"Oh, then it's all right," answered Kennedy, brightening up. "Riley, I will say that you're a wonder at using the organization in ferreting out such things. There's just one more thing I want you to do. I want a sample of the notepaper in the private desks of every one of these people." He handed the policeman a list of his "suspects," as he called them. It included nearly every one mentioned in the case.

Riley studied it dubiously and scratched his chin thoughtfully. "That's a hard one, Mr. Kennedy, sir. You see, it means getting into so many different houses and apartments. Now you don't want to do it by means of a warrant, do you, sir? Of course not. Well, then, how can we get in?"

"You're a pretty good-looking chap yourself, Riley," said Kennedy. "I should think you could jolly a housemaid, if necessary. Anyhow, you can get the fellow on the beat to do it—if he isn't already to be found in the

kitchen. Why, I see a dozen ways of getting the notepaper."

"Oh, it's me that's the lady-killer, sir," grinned Riley. "I'm a regular Blarney stone when I'm out on a job of that sort. Sure, I'll have some of them for you in the morning."

"Bring me what you get, the first thing in the morning, even if you've landed only a few samples," said Kennedy, as Riley departed, straightening his tie and brushing his hat on his sleeve.

"And now, Walter, you too must excuse me to-night," said Craig. "I've got a lot to do, and sha'n't be up to our apartment till very late—or early. But I feel sure I've got a strangle-hold on this mystery. If I get those papers from Riley in good time to-morrow I shall invite you and several others to a grand demonstration here to-morrow night. Don't forget. Keep the whole evening free. It will be a big story."

Kennedy's laboratory was brightly lighted when I arrived early the next evening. One by one his "guests" dropped in. It was evident that they had little liking for the visit, but the coroner had sent out the "invitations," and they had nothing to do but accept. Each one was politely welcomed by the professor and assigned a seat, much as he would have done with a group of students. The inspector and the coroner sat back a little. Mrs. Parker, Mr. Downey, Mr. Bruce, myself, and Miss La Neige sat in that order in the very narrow and uncomfortable little armchairs used by the students during lectures.

At last Kennedy was ready to begin. He took his position behind the long, flat-topped table which he used for his demonstrations before his classes. "I realize, ladies and gentlemen," he began formally, "that I am about to do a very unusual thing; but, as you all know, the police and the coroner have been completely baffled by this terrible mystery and have requested me to attempt to clear up at least certain points in it. I will begin what I have to say by remarking that the tracing out of a crime like this differs in nothing, except as regards the subject-matter, from the search for a scientific truth. The forcing of man's secrets is like the forcing of nature's secrets. Both are pieces of detective work. The methods employed in the detection of crime are, or rather should be, like the methods employed in the process of discovering scientific truth. In a crime of this sort, two kinds of evidence need to be secured. Circumstantial evidence must first be marshalled, and then a motive must be found. I have been gathering facts. But to omit motives and rest contented with mere facts would be inconclusive. It would never convince anybody or convict anybody. In other words, circumstantial evidence must first lead to a suspect, and then this suspect must prove equal to accounting for the facts. It is my hope that each of you may contribute something that will be of service in arriving at the truth of this unfortunate incident."

The tension was not relieved even when Kennedy stopped speaking and began to fuss with a little upright target which he set up at one end of his table. We seemed to be seated over a powder-magazine which threatened to explode at any moment. I, at least, felt the tension so greatly that it was only after he had started speaking again that I

noticed that the target was composed of a thick layer of some putty-like material.

Holding a thirty-two calibre pistol in his right hand and aiming it at the target, Kennedy picked up a large piece of coarse homespun from the table and held it loosely over the muzzle of the gun. Then he fired. The bullet tore through the cloth, sped through the air, and buried itself in the target. With a knife he pried it out.

"I doubt if even the inspector himself could have told us that when an ordinary leaden bullet is shot through a woven fabric the weave of the fabric is in the majority of cases impressed on the bullet, sometimes clearly, sometimes faintly."

Here Kennedy took up a piece of fine batiste and fired another bullet through it.

"Every leaden bullet, as I have said, which has struck such a fabric bears an impression of the threads which is recognizable even when the bullet has penetrated deeply into the body. It is only obliterated partially or entirely when the bullet has been flattened by striking a bone or other hard object. Even then, as in this case, if only a part of the bullet is flattened the remainder may still show the marks of the fabric. A heavy warp, say of cotton velvet, or as I have here, homespun, will be imprinted well on the bullet, but even a fine batiste, containing one hundred threads to the inch, will show marks. Even layers of goods such as a coat, shirt, and undershirt may each leave their marks, but that does not concern us in this case. Now I have here a piece of pongee silk, cut from a woman's automobile-coat. I discharge the bullet through it—so. I compare the bullet now with the others and with the one probed from the neck of Mr. Parker. I find that the marks on that fatal bullet correspond precisely with those on the bullet fired through the pongee coat."

Startling as was this revelation, Kennedy paused only an instant before the next.

"Now I have another demonstration. A certain note figures in this case. Mr. Parker was reading it, or perhaps rereading it, at the time he was shot. I have not been able to obtain that note —at least not in a form such as I could use in discovering what were its contents. But in a certain wastebasket I found a mass of wet and pulp-like paper. It had been cut up, macerated, perhaps chewed; perhaps it had been also soaked with water. There was a wash-basin with running water in this room. The ink had run, and of course was illegible. The thing was so unusual that I at once assumed that this was the remains of the note in question. Under ordinary circumstances it would be utterly valueless as a clue to anything. But to-day science is not ready to let anything pass as valueless.

"I found on microscopic examination that it was an uncommon linen bond paper, and I have taken a large number of microphotographs of the fibres in it. They are all similar. I have here also about a hundred microphotographs of the fibres in other kinds of paper, many of them bonds. These I have accumulated from time to time in my study of the subject. None of them, as you see, shows fibres resembling this one in question, so we may conclude that it is of uncommon quality. Through an

agent of the police I have secured samples of the notepaper of every one who could be concerned, as far as I could see, with this case. Here are the photographs of the fibres of these various notepapers, and among them all is just one that corresponds to the fibres in the wet mass of paper I discovered in the scrap-basket. Now lest anyone should question the accuracy of this method I might cite a case where a man had been arrested in Germany charged with stealing a government bond. He was not searched till later. There was no evidence save that after the arrest a large number of spitballs were found around the courtyard under his cell window. This method of comparing the fibres with those of the regular government paper was used, and by it the man was convicted of stealing the bond. I think it is almost unnecessary to add that in the present case we know precisely who—"

At this point the tension was so great that it snapped. Miss La Neige, who was sitting beside me, had been leaning forward involuntarily. Almost as if the words were wrung from her she whispered hoarsely: "They put me up to doing it; I didn't want to. But the affair had gone too far. I couldn't see him lost before my very eyes. I didn't want her to get him. The quickest way out was to tell the whole story to Mr. Parker and stop it. It was the only way I could think to stop this thing between another man's wife and the man I loved better than my own husband. God knows, Professor Kennedy, that was all—"

"Calm yourself, madame," interrupted Kennedy soothingly. "Calm yourself. What's done is done. The truth must come out. Be calm. Now," he continued, after the first storm of remorse had spent itself and we were all outwardly composed again, "we have said nothing whatever of the most mysterious feature of the case, the firing of the shot. The murderer could have thrust the weapon into the pocket or the folds of this coat"—here he drew forth the automobile coat and held it aloft, displaying the bullet hole—"and he or she (I will not say which) could have discharged the pistol unseen. By removing and secreting the weapon afterward one very important piece of evidence would be suppressed. This person could have used such a cartridge as I have here, made with smokeless powder, and the coat would have concealed the flash of the shot very effectively. There would have been no smoke. But neither this coat nor even a heavy blanket would have deadened the report of the shot.

"What are we to think of that? Only one thing. I have often wondered why the thing wasn't done before. In fact I have been waiting for it to occur. There is an invention that makes it almost possible to strike a man down with impunity in broad daylight in any place where there is sufficient noise to cover up a click, a slight 'Pouf!' and the whir of the bullet in the air.

"I refer to this little device of a Hartford inventor. I place it over the muzzle of the thirty-two-calibre revolver I have so far been using—so. Now, Mr. Jameson, if you will sit at that typewriter over there and write—anything so long as you keep the keys clicking. The inspector will start that imitation stock-ticker in the corner. Now we are ready. I cover the pistol

with a cloth. I defy anyone in this room to tell me the exact moment when I discharged the pistol. I could have shot any of you, and an outsider not in the secret would never have thought that I was the culprit. To a certain extent I have reproduced the conditions under which this shooting occurred.

"At once on being sure of this feature of the case I despatched a man to Hartford to see this inventor. The man obtained from him a complete list of all the dealers in New York to whom such devices had been sold. The man also traced every sale of those dealers. He did not actually obtain the weapon, but if he is working on schedule-time according to agreement he is at this moment armed with a search-warrant and is ransacking every possible place where the person suspected of this crime could have concealed his weapon. For, one of the persons intimately connected with this case purchased not long ago a silencer for a thirty-two-calibre revolver, and I presume that that person carried the gun and the silencer at the time of the murder of Kerr Parker."

Kennedy concluded in triumph, his voice high pitched, his eyes flashing. Yet to all outward appearance not a heart-beat was quickened. Someone in that room had an amazing store of self-possession. The fear flitted across my mind that even at the last Kennedy was baffled.

"I had anticipated some such anti-climax," he continued after a moment. "I am prepared for it."

He touched a bell, and the door to the next room opened. One of Kennedy's graduate students stepped in.

"You have the records, Whiting?" he asked.

"Yes, Professor."

"I may say," said Kennedy, "that each of your chairs is wired under the arm in such a way as to betray on an appropriate indicator in the next room every sudden and undue emotion. Though it may be concealed from the eye, even of one like me who stands facing you, such emotion is nevertheless expressed by physical pressure on the arms of the chair. It is a test that is used frequently with students to demonstrate various points of psychology. You needn't raise your arms from the chair, ladies and gentlemen. The tests are *all over* now. What did they show, Whiting?"

The student read what he had been noting in the next room. At the production of the coat during the demonstration of the markings of the bullet, Mrs. Parker had betrayed great emotion, Mr. Bruce had done likewise, and nothing more than ordinary emotion had been noted for the rest of us. Miss La Neige's automatic record during the tracing out of the sending of the note to Parker had been especially unfavorable to hear; Mr. Bruce showed almost as much excitement; Mrs. Parker very little and Downey very little. It was all set forth in curves drawn by self-recording pens on regular ruled paper. The student had merely noted what took place in the lecture-room as corresponding to these curves.

"At the mention of the noiseless gun," said Kennedy, bending over the record, while the student pointed it out to him and we leaned forward to catch his words, "I find that the curves of Miss La Neige, Mrs. Parker, and Mr. Downey are only so far from normal as would be natural. All of them were witnessing

a thing for the first time with only curiosity and no fear. The curve made by Mr. Bruce shows great agitation and—"

I heard a metallic click at my side and turned hastily. It was Inspector Barney O'Connor, who had stepped out of the shadow with a pair of hand-cuffs.

"James Bruce, you are under arrest," he said.

There flashed on my mind, and I think on the minds of some of the others a picture of another electrically wired chair.

Tracks In the Snow

INSPECTOR VAL was giving Mr. Sorg his views on East Side crime, considered in connection with those nationalities dominant of that feverish region—the Italian and the Russian Jew. In the midst of a convincing period, Mr. Bowles interrupted the discussion.

"Inspector," said Mr. Bowles, "there's a man outside—quite excited, he is—who says he must see you at once. He declined to state his business. The name he gave is Berks—Mr. Berks."

"Berks," repeated Inspector Val. "Never heard it. However, show him in. I shall be glad if there's foundation for his excitement, as I feel like stretching my mental legs."

Mr. Berks was a globular person, of middle age and farmerish look. He wore a catskin cap that had not been new for years. For all his look of agriculture, Mr. Berks did not have the air of independence that belongs with one who plows and plants his own acres. Rather he resembled a man who tilled the estate of some rich overling, to whom his attitude was the attitude of service. His moonlike face showed anxiety and fright. Inspector Val pushed a chair toward him, and Mr. Berks sat down on the edge.

"Take your time, Mr. Berks," said Inspector Val, for he saw that his visitor was a bit shaken, either by his police surroundings or the story he had come to tell. "Take your time."

Inspector Val had the gift—manner and eye and tone—of inspiring nervous folk with confidence. A look of partial comfort stole into the broad visage of Mr. Berks; he heaved a sigh as though his burdens were already lighter.

"Tell me your story," continued Inspector Val, "for I can see that you have one to tell."

"Ay!" said Mr. Berks, with a touch of Devonshire in his accents, "ay! I've a story for sure. Let me begin this way. Me and my Missus keeps Judge Bannister's country house through the winter—sort o' caretakers like. You may know where it is, sir; Fordham Heights, on the Westchester side of the Harlem. Well, there's been nobody in

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the house since November but me and my Missus, and a coachman kind of fellow of the name of James Settle. He looked after a pair of horses and five cows, that were being wintered at the place. There wasn't much to do: get up the fire wood, feed the horses and cows, and milk the latter—in short do chores like. It was last night about ten o'clock, and Jim—that's what me and my Missus always called Settle—started for the barn to shake down a lock of hay for the horses. It's a goodish stretch from the house to the barn, and when Jim was about one hundred yards from the house, say within twenty yards of the barn, I heerd him give a screech. It was awful, that screech! Not so loud, mind, but just the sort that sends a shiver along your skin. For all it scared me faint, I ran to the back door —me and my Missus was sitting in the kitchen—but I was too late. Jim was gone."

"Gone! Where had he gone?"

"That I don't know, sir!" Mr. Berks lowered his voice as though both puzzled and terrified. "It was like glamour or witchery. Jim just went away through the air."

Inspector Val shot a swift glance at Mr. Berks. Was his caller crazy? Or was it merely the spell of strong drink? Clearly neither.

"What makes you say that Settle went away through the air?"

"Because it was from up high his voice sounded."

"His voice?"

"Yes, sir; he called down to me—called to me twice."

"What sort of cry? Terror?"

"Why, yes—terror, sir! But he spoke words, too. He says: 'Oh, it's got me!' Then a little later and further away: 'It's got me!' That was the last I heerd."

"What did you do next?"

"Well, me and my Missus closed the door, and sat down without speaking a word. We sat there quite a spell, for we was main frightened. Then I begun to get a little courage. I lit a lantern, and said I'd go and see what had happened Jim."

"And you started for the barn?"

"Why, yes! I held the lantern low, and kept following Jim's tracks, to see where they ended, and if any queer marks of whatever took him would show in the snow. You remember it snowed an inch or so about eight o'clock last night. That made it easy to follow Jim's tracks, as they were the first that had been made since the storm."

"You didn't walk in the tracks?"

"Oh, no; I walked to one side, as did my Missus who came with me. Jim's tracks are there yet for anybody to see."

"Good!"

"As I said, about one hundred yards from the house the tracks ended. There was a lot of footprints in the snow, but they had all been made by Jim. It was as though he struggled against being borne away."

"Last night," said Inspector Val, as though confirming a point of weather, "after the snow had ceased to fall, it was dark and still—a quiet night."

"Ay! a dark, still night, sir!"

"And your story, as I understand, is that at ten o'clock, while Settle was on his way to the barn, some thing or creature swooped down on him."

"What else? There were his tracks as plain as life, walking out into the snow. Of a sudden they end without turning back. Then, after that first screech, he called to me twice from out of the air—a goodish piece up he was, the last time, too; I could but hear him."

"And his words were :'It's got me!' "

"Precisely! 'Oh! it's got me!' he cries. Then again: 'It's got me!' I'll not have forgotten, for it makes me shudder to my heart."

"But with the night so still, didn't you hear any other sound?"

"There was a dull beating of wings, maybe" said Mr. Berks, again sinking his voice and glancing furtively about. "At least it sounded l'ke wings—a great muffled heavy flutter of something."

"Do you believe in ghosts, Mr. Berks?"

"Now I don't exactly know, neither!" returned Mr. Berks, a trifle shamed, but dogged. "Isn't Jim being taken away like the work of a witch or warlock?—something demoniac, to put it the fairest?"

"What do you say, Sorg?" asked Inspector Val, wheeling on his assistant, who had heard Mr. Berks with greedy ears. "Are you for demonology?"

"The condor," said Mr. Sorg, solemnly, as though reciting from a book—"the condor of the Andes is the largest bird of prey in the world. Haven't they got a condor in the Bronx Zoo?"

"Dismiss the condor, Sorg," said Inspector Val, beginning to laugh. "The biggest condor, on the tallest peak of the Andes, would find its work cut out to manage thirty pounds, travelers' tales to the contrary notwithstanding. There never was the bird large enough, and strong enough, to carry off a man, since the great roc helped Sinbad the Sailor out of the Valley of Diamonds." Then to Mr. Berks: "I think I'll go out to the Bannister place with you."

"I wish you would! I'd take it very kindly, sir! Surely something ought to be done about Jim."

"Assuredly! We must puzzle out this riddle! Nothing will have obliterated those tracks?"

"Oh, no! My Missus wouldn't stay when I left; she went to a neighbors. There's been no one at the place to destroy the tracks."

"I'll go alone, Sorg," observed Inspector Val, looking at his watch.

"Have you adopted any theory?" asked Mr. Sorg.

"I never adopt a theory. I wait for a theory to adopt me."

The Bannister place was a great stone house. The barn was distant about thirty rods from the house. The grounds were, in shape, a long rectangle and measured forty acres. There were shrubbery and bushes and a few small trees about the house, and in a far corner of the grounds to the west was a clump of native forest trees—full-grown maples and beeches and oaks. The snow-hidden expanse, between the house and barn lay open and free of trees or shrubs, being in summer given over to flower-beds and grass.

The house, with the barn a little to the north and west of it, stood on a point of land high above the Harlem River, of which one could get a shimmering glimpse through the bare winter-stripped trees. From the house, westward, the land fell away sharply

to an old road running north and south. This road marked the western boundary of the Bannister domain. Between the road and the river, separated from the road by a thickly wooded strip, was a railway track.

Mr. Berks had not erred in any particular concerning the trail in the snow. There, as obvious as a page of print, the white snow showed where Settle had walked towards the barn. Then of a sudden the end came in a confused flurry of tracks—not many, nor running away, but all collected within a diameter of four feet, and telling of that horror and stampede of wits which Settle must have tasted before he was carried off. His fate, too, whatever it was, had come upon him like a clap of thunder; he neither saw nor heard it in its descent; for the tracks, up to the point of disappearance, showed measured and steady, as though the mind of him who made them were at tranquil ease.

Directly westward from where the tracks ended, and distant two hundred feet, was a thick-boughed dogwood tree. The dogwood stood alone, the only notable feature of what in July days would be a lawn. Inspector Val, after a glance at Settle's tracks, considered the dogwood briefly, as though he fancied it might have some connection with the enigma he was trying to solve. But in the end his eyes came back to the footprints of the lost man; he bent over them long and thoughtfully.

The situation possessed a sinister savor—this even procession of tracks; and then to mysteriously end, as though he who made them had been snuffed away without warning. Inspector Val examined track after track, to make certain that Settle, in some crazy or criminal freak, had not maneuvered a return by walking backward, setting each foot in the prints it made in coming. No such miracle of pedestrianism had been performed; the imprints told of but one pressure of the foot, no more.

Inspector Val called Mr. Berks' attention to the fact that the trail ran unalarmed and steady up to that small circumscribed flurry of terror that told the end.

"It is as open as a book," said he, "that Settle had never a breath of warning. How comes it then that you, twenty rods and more away, could hear a dull beating of wings?"

"Jim was very deaf, sir! You had to shout to make him hear. My Missus, her voice not being over-strong, couldn't talk with him at all."

Mrs. Berks, observing the coming of her husband and Inspector Val, had returned from the neighbors; Inspector Val had got a glimpse of her through the kitchen window.

"Remain here!" he said to Mr. Berks.

Mrs. Berks did not offer those rotund pleasant proportions that distinguished her good man. She was thin, with a shy black eye, and looked a year or two further along than did Mr. Berks. She bobbed an old-fashioned curtesy to Inspector Val, who addressed her directly.

"Mr. Berks and I were talking of Settle. Had you known him long?"

"I should say the better part of a year." Mrs. Berks spoke in a bird-like treble.

"Was he companionable? Did he talk much?"

"No, sir; he was a silent man, though

that may have been his hearing. It was hard to make him hear, sir; a body couldn't have much talk with him."

That question of deafness seemed answered, and Inspector Val turned away to Mr. Berks, who had remained near the barn.

As he stepped from the kitchen door, he observed that Mr. Berks was in talk with a stranger. Both Mr. Berks and the stranger seemed greatly excited. They met him midway between house and barn.

"This is Mr. Stearns, sir," said Mr. Berks, hurriedly, "a neighbor down the hill. He's found Settle, sir!"

"He's dead by the railway track," broke in Mr. Stearns, who was no one to let another tell his news for him. "My cow, Bossy, was out along the track, and I was afeard for her, so says I to my wife, 'Betsy, I'll go drive up Bossy.' I ain't gone fifty yards, when I sees a bundle of rags ahead lying by the rails. At first I think it's baggage from a train; but when I gets to it, there it is Jim Settle, sure enough. Only I'd never knowed the face—which was past all recognizing. It must have been the train struck him, Berks," concluded Mr. Stearns.

"Lead us to the place," said Inspector Val.

Settle's body lay by the railway track, but so much under the lea of a sharp embankment as to be out of sight from a train. It was rigid and cold. Both body and limbs were so twisted as to show that not a sound bone remained in the skin. The snow was about two inches deep, and three feet from where the body lay clewed up in a broken heap was a great splotch, as though the body had originally struck there, and then bounded from the hard frozen earth to its present position. The snow, for six inches about the body, was red with the ooze of blood. As Mr. Stearns had stated, the features were not to be recognized. The clothes were enough, however; Mr. Berks, as well as Mr. Stearns, knew them for the clothes of Settle.

While the body was crushed and bruised, and every bone broken, there was but one rent in the clothing. The coat had been ripped, the tear extending from the collar backward and downward over the right shoulder, to a place near the small of the back. Not alone the coat, but the waistcoat and thick woolen shirts of the dead man were correspondingly torn, and a ragged gash gaped in the back and shoulder muscles, where the flesh was laid open to the bone.

Inspector Val made a most minute examination. When he straightened up he had his eye admiringly on Mr. Stearns.

"This is a most important discovery!" Mr. Stearns swelled with pride, being a true ruralist, and was elated to thus find himself a center of interest and encomium. "Since it was you who found the body, it is your privilege to notify the coroner. The nearest telephone station will call him."

Mr. Stearns was off like an arrow; he did not propose to lose one syllable of that celebration, which should belong to a first and weighty witness at the inquest.

"You said nothing, I hope," observed Inspector Val to Mr. Berks, when they

were again alone, "as to the manner of Settle's disappearance?"

"Not a word."

"My suggestion is that you keep silent until you have further word from me. It may not come for a week. You'd better remain by the body until the coroner arrives."

Inspector Val scribbled a line on one of his cards. The card read: "Inspector Val, Central Office, Mulberry Street." Underneath was written "To Coroner: Please postpone finding until you've talked with me.—V."

"Give the coroner that," he said to Mr. Berks, as the latter took the card. "Don't answer questions, or say aught of the happenings of last night. I like to keep these matters dark; to turn on a half light might defeat our search."

Mr. Berks closed his lips firmly, as one who has decided to remain mute in the face of every query.

Mr. Sorg met his chief more than once during the next seven days, but was too well trained to be guilty of the grievous error of putting questions. By suggestion of Inspector Val, the coroner had had one hearing, and taken the testimony of the rustical Mr. Stearns. It was a tremendous moment for that bumpkin, albeit all he could say was that, while in quest of the errant "Bossy," he came across the body. He volunteered a belief that death was caused by the night express. Also, he identified the remains as Settle's by the clothes, and, in support of his express train theory, remembered how Settle was dull of ear.

"He was as deaf as an adder of scripture, your honor," said Mr. Stearns, with a bow to the coroner.

That functionary, following the evidence of Mr. Stearns, adjourned the inquiry a fortnight.

It was one week to the hour, after Mr. Berks' visit to Mulberry Street, when Inspector Val sent for Mr. Sorg.

"Sorg," he said, in his official tone, "this afternoon at sharp two, you will please be at the Twenty-fifth Street door of the Hoffman. I shall come out of the hotel by that door, with a gentleman. To avoid mistakes, as I pass you I'll identify him by calling him 'Mr. Notes.' We will separate at the door; you are then to shadow him to his home, wherever it is. It may be that he lives out of town, so be ready to take a train. Having followed him to his home, by way of making sure, wait a half hour to see if he comes out. At the end of the half hour, rap at the door and ask whether a Mr. Seton resides there. The reply in all chance will be in the affirmative. Thereupon, elaborate a bit and say: 'Mr. Erasmus Seton of number two Wall?' The answer to this must inevitably be 'No'; for, unless the City Directory is a work of fiction, Mr. Erasmus Seton of number two Wall lives at the Netherlands. Having gotten your 'No,' explain that you were misdirected and return to me."

Two o'clock found Mr. Sorg at the Twenty-fifth Street door of the Hoffman. There were several loitering about, and a more or less coming and going of cabs, so there was small risk of the broadshouldered, commonplace Mr. Sorg, in cap and peajacket, being identified as a member of the city's secret police. Making provision for every possibility that might attend his man's de-

parture, he ordered a coupe to stand ready across the street.

Fifteen minutes, half an hour, three-quarters went by; still no Inspector Val. The mercury was above freezing, the streets a-slush with snow; this made the air damp and raw. Mr. Sorg planted himself inside the double doors, from which position he could watch both hotel and street, and also avoid the weather.

At three o'clock, across the hall from Mr. Sorg the door of the elevator slammed open and Inspector Val got out. He was followed by a lean little rat-faced man, whose sallow cheek and lank iron-gray locks, hanging down to his shoulders, were in keeping with the stoop that almost bent his thin frame double. One claw-like hand carried the cane wherewith he supported his shuffling steps, while the other—long, meager, like the talons of a bird—clutched at a thick shawl, wrapped closely about the throat. The shawl, being voluminous, hung down about the starved flanks, and the coat-tails and trousers, visible below its fringe, were black and rusty. As the pair passed Mr. Sorg, Inspector Val observed:

"Then, Mr. Notes, you are unable to say just when I shall have the pleasure of seeing your great device."

"Sir," replied the little rat-faced man, "it is impossible to name a day at this time. However, you will probably hear from me. Meanwhile," and the little rat-faced man bowed and smirked in an amazing fashion, "I am under a world of obligations for this meeting. If you should return to London, Professor, before we meet again, write me to the care of the St. Denis, as you did to-day, and tell me what advancement you are making."

"Believe me," returned Inspector Val, as he pressed the bird-claw hand, "I shall surely see you before I see London."

"But if you don't?"

"Then I shall write."

Mr. Sorg's coupe precautions were well taken for the little rat-faced man signalled a hansom. Inspector Val helped him in, which did not please him. He hesitated, and then, since he must, gave the direction.

"Drive to the Twenty-third Street ferry, North River."

Away rattled the little rat-faced man; after him, not one hundred feet behind, rattled Mr. Sorg. Inspector Val saw them fairly off; then lighting a cigar he turned and strolled down Broadway.

At eight o'clock in the evening, Inspector Val sauntered into his rooms in Mulberry Street.

"Any word from Sorg?" he asked.

The officer on the night desk said Mr. Sorg had 'phoned that he would be in at ten o'clock.

"It's as I thought," mused Inspector Val, divesting himself of his street coat, "my weasel-visaged friend's home isn't far away."

At ten o'clock Mr. Sorg appeared; from the splashes of mud on his person, it was clear that he had been doing a mile or so of country road afoot.

"Well?" said Inspector Val, composing himself comfortably on the lounge.

"You heard your party say 'Twenty-third Street ferry?'" began Mr. Sorg. pulling up a chair. "That was a blind. At Eighth Avenue he ordered his hansom about, and went to Sherry's. There

he dismissed it, and after a wait of five minutes took a Sherry electric cab to the Majestic. Paying off the electric he shuffled his way to the Elevated station, Ninth Avenue and Seventy-second Street, and caught an uptown train. He left the train at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street and took the surface cars for the Fort Lee ferry-house. There he crossed the river. A colored lad, driving an old rockaway buggy, the horse ready to fall dead with age, was waiting."

"Ah!" observed Inspector Val, lighting a cigar, "I begin to see how you collected those splashes of mud."

"You begin to see that I was in for a rough time on the muddy Jersey roads. It was growing dark, and for a moment I was bothered. It began to look as though I should have to follow the ramshackle rockaway on foot. Keeping it in sight would have been no more trouble than keeping a hearse in sight, but, as you surmise, those Jersey roads are not inviting. However, some luck was with me. An express wagon had just dumped a consignment of packages at the ferry-house, and I gave the boy who drove it a dollar to take the same road with the rockaway. I said nothing about the rockaway particularly, but spoke of a country brother off in the direction it was going, whom I was about to surprise with a visit. The boy knew nothing of the old party in the rockaway, for I put the question. He was a dull boy, and since I asked fifty questions, he wasn't particularly impressed by the one about the rockaway. Your party drove to a cottage three miles from Fort Lee. He went into the cottage, while the darky drove round to the barn. From the way your party let himself in with his own key, I make no question of his living there."

"Did he act as though he feared he might be followed?"

"Not after he reached the Majestic. Up to that time he had been sticking his head out of the window and squinting back, at every cross street."

"What next?"

"After your party got home, I let my boy drive on another half mile; I was looking for a house in which to install my brother. The country round about Fort Lee is somewhat primeval, and houses are few and far between. At last I saw a light across a little hollow.

" 'Who lives there?' I asked. As usual the boy doesn't know. Wonderfully dull boy! 'Well then,' says I, 'it's my brother. You can leave me here, as I don't want even the rattle of a wagon wheel to notify him in advance of the joyful surprise that's in store.'

"With that I got quit of my express boy. When he was well on his way back to Fort Lee, I returned to the cottage. The windows had been dark; now I found them all lit up. There being no dogs, I scouted the situation, front and rear. It's a one-story cottage; counting the kitchen, I don't figure more than four rooms. The colored boy was in the kitchen cooking supper. I could make him out through a window. In the same way, I got a flash at your party busy in a front room over sheets of paper, stopping occasionally to do a bit of mathematics on a slate."

"Ah, I see!" laughed Inspector Val. "He was measuring up, algebraically, certain rules I gave him."

"After I'd sized up the place, I gave

the door a thump with my stick, there being neither bell nor knocker. The colored boy opened it. As he did so, a whiff of broiled ham floated forth, and I had hardest work to keep from inviting myself in to supper. However, I restrained the impulse and, as you directed, inquired if Mr. Seton lived there.

" 'Yes, sir,' says the boy.

" 'Mr. Erasmus Seton of number two Wall?' I asks.

" 'No, sir; not Mr. 'Ras'mus but Mr. Dan'l Seton,' he says.

" 'Then I got the wrong steer,' says I; and headed for you."

"There was a barn, you say?"

"It was more like a low shed."

"Were the house and shed all? There should have been a third building."

"Now you mention it, there was. It stood back in a little valley. I saw it, as I scouted to the rear of the cottage, before I went to the door."

"What was it like?"

"It was dark, and I didn't go near it. From the outlines, as they showed against a snow-covered slope beyond, it was of a fairish height, with a gable roof. I took it to be another barn."

Inspector Val looked at his watch; it was eleven o'clock. He began pulling on his overcoat for the street.

"Meet me here," said he, "at four tomorrow afternoon. A lively team should land us at our Fort Lee friend's by six. You and I will pay him a visit."

CHAPTER II

Inspector Val had two weaknesses, books and horses. The latter fad was in evidence next day when, at the hour set for the meeting between himself and Mr. Sorg, a pair of slashing bays driven by a black coachman and drawing a Stanhope came dancing into Mulberry street, and halted at the Central Office door. A moment later, Inspector Val and Mr. Sorg were bowling along for the Fort Lee ferry.

Crossing Stanhope and all to the Fort Lee side of the river, under the pilotage of Mr. Sorg they struck northward on a country road. The day had been clear but with enough of frost to dispose of the vexatious question of mud. Altogether, the drive, so far from being a hardship, was pleasant enough. In confirmation of this, Mr. Sorg was moved to observe:

"This is a decided improvement on yesterday."

Inspector Val mumbled an assent; plainly his mind was running on whatever business had brought him to the wrong side of the Hudson.

It was characteristic of those close yet queer relations, which subsisted between Inspector Val and Mr. Sorg, that the former hadn't spoken a word which could be tortured into furnishing even the shadow of an inference as to what was the purpose of their trip. Nor, on his taciturn part, had Mr. Sorg put a single interrogatory. Mr. Sorg had learned many lessons during his rough and tumble life; most of all, he had learned the lesson of Inspector Val. That nervously peculiar gentleman had an angry horror of the congenital cross-examiner; questions and question-mongers were his pet aversion. Wherefore, Mr. Sorg was wont to humor this weakness of his chief; and the latter, while loving Mr. Sorg for his ironbound vir-

tues of courage and a lion-like strength, loved him most for a wordlessness, that spoke never to interrogate, and only when there was something to tell.

The cottage the two came seeking was not on the main road, but down a lane to the left. Mr. Sorg said that it was distant a quarter of a mile from the road. On receiving the news, Inspector Val halted the Stanhope at the mouth of the lane, and there the two left it with word that it follow in twenty minutes and wait in front of the cottage, the far-twinkling lights of which Mr. Sorg pointed out. The pair would do the short balance of their journey on foot.

The cottage was that small one-story structure which Mr. Sorg had described. The new moon sent down enough light, from a sky without a cloud, to show it half-ruinous and unpainted.

Before going to the cottage, Inspector Val scrutinized the region round about.

"Is that the third building you spoke of?" he asked Mr. Sorg, pointing where the ridgepole showed dimly above a knoll.

"Yes. It stands in the hollow beyond that swell."

Inspector Val leaped the fence, Mr. Sorg following more heavily. A walk of forty rods across a pasture, brought them to the crest of the knoll; the building that interested them lay immediately at its foot. Like the cottage, it was unpainted; and, while of more recent construction, had the same gray, storm-beaten, weather-stained appearance.

Inspector Val descended the slope for a closer study. The building possessed a decidedly queer appearance, and was over-long for its width, being about fifteen feet by forty. The height, too, was considerable, measuring full thirty feet to the eaves. In the center, the sharp gable made it eight feet more. Strangest of all, there wasn't sign of door or window. Inspector Val, upon a closer examination, called Mr. Sorg's eye to the fact that one entire end of the building was made up of two leaves of a great double door. When they were thrown open, it was as though that end had been taken out. These doors were held fast against present investigation, by double padlocks. All this could be observed in the pale partial light of the young moon. That, however, was the limit of observation; for, while there were cracks of width and merit, between the up-and-down barn-boards which constituted the walls, it was far too dark to talk of seeing what might be housed therein.

After holding his ineffectual eye to the crack for a whole minute, Mr. Sorg gave it up. He appealed to Inspector Val, with a gesture of impatience.

"What do you say, Chief? Shall I get a rail from yonder fence, and knock a board off?"

"Why should you knock a board off?"

"To see what's inside?"

"I know what's inside; I knew before we left Mulberry street." Then, as though unable to longer withstand Mr. Sorg's eyes: "This is the cage of your condor of the Andes."

Mr. Sorg looked wistfully but with puzzled face at the building. Inspector Val touched him on the shoulder, and pointed towards the cottage.

"Let us have a talk with the owner. I've no doubt he'll satisfy your curios-

ity touching that largest bird of prey in the world. I think I can promise you a glimpse of it."

It was a half minute's walk. As they approached they made out, through the window, the little rat-faced man, busy over a draughting table. The room in which he worked was brilliantly lighted, and they could see him plainly.

"That's the way he was last night," said Mr. Sorg.

Mr. Sorg's rap brought the colored lad to the door. The moment the door was opened, Inspector Val stepped inside; being inside, he addressed the surprised darky.

"Say to Mr. Seton that Professor Reed desires to speak with him."

The room in which the rat-faced little man was busy with compass, tri-square, and draughting pen opened off the hall, where Inspector Val and Mr. Sorg stood waiting.

"Professor Reed!" they heard him exclaim, in his harsh crackling tones. There was a note of surprise and annoyance, almost of alarm. After a pause, as though mentally considering 'Professor Reed,' he came into the hall.

"There are two of you!" he cried, startled by the sight of Mr. Sorg.

"Permit me, Mr. Seton," said Inspector Val, blandly, "to present Mr. Sorg of the New York Central Office."

The little rat-faced man stared at Mr. Sorg, saying never a word, but with less of fear than wonder in his manner.

"This is remarkable!" he rasped out at last. And then, as though a sudden thought had struck him, he shifted his beady eye to Inspector Val: "How did you know my name?"

"You may guess, when I advise you never to attempt an alias, by merely spelling your own name backward. Besides being vulgar, as the most commonplace trick of criminals of inferior stamp, it fails of the concealment aimed at nine times in ten." The little rat-faced man stood open-mouthed before Inspector Val. The latter went on: "Come, Mr. Seton; do yourself credit, and invite Mr. Sorg and myself into your study."

The little rat-faced man held his ground, darting glances of suspicion.

"You spoke of my alias 'Notes'" said he. "Now on my part I don't think you are Professor Reed."

"Quite right, too!" responded Inspector Val, affably. "Like Mr. Sorg, I'm of the detective police. You may call me Inspector Val. May I now renew my hint about your study?"

"Then you aren't an aeronaut?"

The little rat-faced man got this off as though the thought gave him decided relief.

"Let me assure you, Mr. Seton, that I shall never soar higher than I can be carried on the wings of stones and mortar."

"And you've not come to spy upon my ideas?—steal my inventions?"

"Such a larceny is as much beyond our purpose, as it would be impossible to our moral natures."

The little rat-faced man glanced brightly and quickly, with his gimlet eyes, from Inspector Val to Mr. Sorg, and back to Inspector Val. His survey seemed to reassure him; he led the way without more parley into the room where he had been at work.

It was a large pleasant room; a wood

fire snapped and crackled in the fireplace. There were a rough pine table, such as architects use, and three or four heavy chairs. In a corner stood the model of an electric engine, the whole culminating in a great four-winged fan, of the sort employed for cooling rooms, only larger. On the walls hung a dozen drawings of balloons and airships, from the globular variety to the long cigar-shaped contrivance.

Mr. Sorg took in these features with a single keen sweep of his eyes, and then established himself near the door; it being instinctive with Mr. Sorg, whatever the occasion, to cut off everybody's retreat. Inspector Val, with an easier grace, drew a chair towards the open fire.

"May I light a cigar?" he asked.

It was surprising how in a moment that bent and shuffling little rat-faced man had thawed. He beamed as he answered:

"Most certainly, sir! I beg you will make yourself at home. And let me defend my hospitality by having in a bottle of wine."

The little rat-faced man beat the floor smartly with his cane. In response to this unusual signal, the darky boy appeared bearing a bottle of burgundy as carefully as though it were a child asleep. The little rat-faced man poured three glasses. The zealous Mr. Sorg held his untouched, until he had seen the host drink his own personal glassful to the final drop. Then Mr. Sorg drank his, and smacked his lips. Inspector Val, more confident or more polite, kept the host company in his drinking.

"And now," said the latter, "tell me why, when you are no aeronaut, you masqueraded as the great Professor Reed, and trolled me into meeting you?"

"You misstate the case, Mr. Seton; you trolled yourself. However, let me tell you what brings us to your house."

"I shall be pleased to hear, sir."

"I will premise by saying that Mr. Sorg and myself possess no official powers in your State. That is of small consequence, however, since our purpose is not to make an arrest, but an investigation. Yesterday, when we talked, you covered up one truth; you've gone much further in perfecting your airship than you admitted."

"I was afraid you might take advantage of my discoveries!" protested the little man, apologetically. "Now when I understand that you are not professionals, and know nothing and probably care nothing about aeronautics, it is a different matter."

"It is unimportant; the point is this. Tuesday night, a week ago, you had out your airship, and made an excursion as far eastward at least as Fordham Heights."

"You are right. The experiments of that evening, for first experiments, were extremely successful; although I cannot imagine how you managed to observe them, for the night was quite dark."

"Let me ask a question."

The little man glanced up expectantly; he was refilling Inspector Val's glass, his talon of a hand as steady as a tree.

"Did you know that you killed a man that night on Fordham Heights?"

"Killed a man?" The dry terror of

the thought reduced the rasping cackle to a husky croak. The rat-like eyes filled up with a slow horror. "Then it was a man my grappling-iron caught?"

The little man sank to the floor as though stricken; Inspector Val lifted him, and placed him in his chair. The bottle of burgundy fell and broke on on the stone hearth, the purple wine running about in the ashes.

After a moment, the little man was able to partially command himself. Brushing back the lank, iron-gray locks, he looked vacantly at Inspector Val. Then his eyes dropped, and he began to shiver.

"To think that I've caused a fellow creature's death!" he whispered.

Inspector Val attempted the part of comforter. "It was a sad accident; but, when all is said, only an accident."

"This will end it! I shall do no more!"

Inspector Val let the little man wander on without interruption. Presently, when the latter's composure had somewhat returned, he re-commenced, gently.

"Why not tell what happened?"

"I will do my best," returned the little man, making an effort. "Of course, in a general way, you understand about balloons. The two big questions with the aeronautic world are how to control a balloon so as to travel at will to any given place, in the teeth of winds if need be. Next, having arrived at your destination, how to manage a safe descent. I think I have solved those questions. Certainly I can control my machine, taking it whither I will at times when the wind does not exceed eight miles an hour—a fair breeze! My theory was perfect, my machine complete, and on that fatal night, it being both dark and still, I resolved upon a thorough test. I was in the air two hours, and my device for controlling the airship worked admirably; I could drive it where I would."

"And this," interrupted Inspector Val, pointing to the model of the electric machine, "is the engine you control it with?"

"It is the device itself," said the little man, his sallow cheek reddening with revivified interest. He crossed over: "See," said he, indicating the big four-flanged fan. "The engine will drive this contrivance twenty thousand revolutions a minute. You know something of air-pressures, and the force of winds. I could give you the formula; but it is enough, since you are not scientific, to say that this device, driven to top power, will exert a force of four hundred pounds. Also, you will observe that the fan, or propellor arrangement, works on a ball and socket joint. I can turn it up or down or horizontal; in brief it can be used to lift or lower the airship, as well as drive it on its way."

"I think I understand," said Inspector Val, assuming a sympathetic interest. "Now to return to your experimental trip."

The cheek of the little man whitened anew, while his eyes resumed their troubled look of sorrow.

"I would give all I possess if I'd never made it!" he said. "However, let me come at once to the worst. I had been east as far as the Sound, and was on my return. As I floated over the intervening tongue of land between the Sound and the Harlem River, the shaft-

ing that drives the propellor began to get hot; a collar was too tight. I was no more than one hundred feet above the ground, and, as I didn't know the extent of the trouble, I deemed it best to descend. Having halted the airship, I could loosen the collar with a twist of the wrench. I have a half-inch drag-rope, with a grappling-hook at the end. The rope passes through the bottom of the car, and can be lowered or hauled in at will. When fully out, it is eighty feet long. I had all but stopped the driving gear, and was floating westward by the mere motion of the air. I saw a big house, and beyond it, at quite a distance, stood a clumpy tree, with a free space all about. I hoped to pass over the tree, and entangle my grappling-hook in its branches; this would bring my airship to a halt. I could then lower it to the ground with safety."

"Some such notion crossed my mind," interjected Inspector Val, "the moment I set eyes on that dogwood."

"I could see the tree quite plainly," resumed the little man, "because of the snow. I had let down my drag-rope, full length, and was expecting with each moment to feel it comb the tree, when of a sudden there came a mighty tug, tilting the airship; and then I heard a scream. I had noticed nothing below but the tree; the tug at the drag-rope, and the awful cry, startled me horribly. In my agitation I did two things both wrong. I started the propellor full-head, at the same time emptying out my sand-ballast. The balloon, while still keeping up its slow drift westward, rose rapidly; for, aside from throwing overboard the ballast, the propellor's shaft had been raised to a perpendicular, and in that position, going full head, it exerted as I've told you a lifting force of four hundred pounds."

"You knew, of course," broke in Inspector Val, "that some live creature was being carried aloft on your grappling-hook?"

"By no means! My thought was that the creature had freed itself. To be candid, while my ideas were by no means clear, I took it, from the cry as well as the surroundings, to be a sheep. After that first scream, what with the whirr and flutter of the fan, I could hear nothing. I didn't touch the drag-rope until I was fairly over the Harlem; it was free then. And you say," observed the little man, a catch in his throat like a sob—"you say it was a man?"

"You carried him two hundred yards into the air, before the grappling-hook released him through the tearing of his coat. His body, crushed to a pulp by the fall, was found near the railway track."

The little man squeezed his claw-like hands between his knees, while his face worked with regret and grief.

"I shall make amends to his family," he said. "As much as one may with money. I shall make amends, though it take the last dollar of my fortune."

"He was wholly without family. But, tell me! Why didn't you return after you got control of yourself and your airship?"

"I was prodigiously shaken; so much so that I wholly forgot the tight collar and the hot shaft. I only thought of getting home. I made the journey without mishap; it is no more than three miles, as the crows fly, from here to Fordham Heights."

"But you must surely have thought of that poor creature, torn by your grappling-hook?"

"Think of it! Yes; but I made no doubt that it was a sheep. I could do no good by returning; and I feared to expose my invention. It was to hide what I've been doing, until my designs were perfect, that I came to this out-of-the-way place. I was afraid, if I went back, that it would result in a newspaper story before I was ready for it. You may be sure that, had I realized the truth, I should have returned to either repair the wrong or bear the blame."

"Let me see your airship," said Inspector Val, getting to his feet. "I know where it is; I have already reconnoitered that narrow building in the hollow."

"You may see it, and welcome! The more, since you are likely to be the last, besides myself, to look upon it."

The little man was utterly depressed, and his shoulders had taken on an added droop. He lit a lantern, and led the way to that slim, tall structure in the hollow. Once there, he unlocked and threw open those wide end doors.

The balloon proper, a long, cigar-shaped contrivance of oiled silk, wholly filled the upper part of the narrow building. The little man showed his gas-making arrangements, and explained that he had inflated it just before Inspector Val and Mr. Sorg arrived, having planned another experimental trip for that very night.

"It is so clear a night," said he, "that I intended to defer starting until about two in the morning. I thought I would only circle about the countryside; I wanted to avoid notice for another month or two."

Inspector Val examined the car. It was wicker work, and the material used in the weaving had been first sheathed in rubber.

"The car contrivance is aluminum," explained the little man; "the idea was to combine lightness with strength. Car, engine, drag-rope, ballast, with myself aboard, weigh under four hundred pounds; fully charged, the lifting power of the balloon itself is almost five hundred. This is aside from what help can instantly be given it by raising the fan-shaft to perpendicular." The little man gazed steadily and sadly at his darling device for sailing the sky. "It has been friend and family to me! More, it was my religion—my god! I have sacrificed to it thousands of money, years of thought! And now the end!"

The little man covered his face with his thin hands. It was thus that Inspector Val and Mr. Sorg left him, when they came away.

The bays stood waiting, full of impatience; in a moment they were whirling away for Fort Lee.

"That was a silken piece of work!" observed Mr. Sorg.

"Simplicity itself!" For all the complacent modesty of the utterance, Mr. Sorg could tell that Inspector Val was pleased with himself. "All it required was a little thought. To begin with, I was obliged to decline Berks' theory of a fiend. Neither could I see my way clear to adopt your ingenious suggestion of a condor. Assuming that Settle had been carried off, manner and form as Mr. Berks related, there was but one solution: it was done by a bal-

loon; there could be nothing else within the rim of the sane and possible. Mr. Berks' 'fluttering of mighty wings' aided the thought. Also I considered the character of the night—quiet and dark; and even took in the dogwood tree. Some airship, drifting low, or about to descend—the open space was an argument for the latter—had caught Settle with its steel three-pronged grappling-hook. Thus I argued, while looking at the tracks in the snow; when I saw his body, and found the long deep gash in back and shoulder, I regarded it as sure."

"And naturally," interjected Mr. Sorg, in an ecstasy of admiration, "the next move was to locate the air-sailor."

"That was indubitably the next step. There had been no late newspaper talk of any local airship, and I came to the conclusion that some ambitious aeronaut must have built himself a machine, and was experimenting in secret. Being secret, he had waited until after dark before beginning his voyage that night. Settle was swooped on at ten o'clock; the airship could not have been up four hours. With so little breeze stirring, and afloat so short a time, that airship must have been, when it killed Settle, within twelve miles from the place of starting. The chances were that the distance was even less. There then was my problem: To discover an aeronaut who was, so to call it, in hiding within a radius of a dozen miles from Fordham Heights. A look at the map will show that description embraces quite a bit of country."

"One may say so!"

"There were a score of methods, any of which should have found my man; but most of them meant time, and it was the short cut I was after. You know what inventors are?—intense, eager, swallowed up by their project. Figuring on my hidden aeronaut as being such another individual as this Mr. Seton, I caused a local item to be printed in the 'American.' The great aeronaut of Europe is the English scientist, Professor Reed, and for the purpose of my notice I stole that sky-traveler's name. The item ran after this sort:

Professor Reed, the celebrated aeronaut, is quartered at the Hoffman. He comes from Berlin, where he has been in conference with the German Emperor —a potentate who is profoundly taken up with air navigation. While France is interesting herself in submarines, the Kaiser means to perfect the airship. It is understood that Professor Reed has agreed to design an airship for the Germans that shall be as much under control in the air as is a ship in the water.

"The idea was," continued Inspector Val, "that my fellow aeronaut would see this, and I reckoned on a call from him. Birds of a feather, Sorg! Besides he would come, not on Professor Reed's account, but his own, and on the chance of picking up a hint that should help along his device. Nor was I wrong. I got a letter at the Hoffman, proposing an interview. This was signed 'Mr. Notes,' and asked me to address my correspondent at the St. Denis."

" 'Notes,' " broke in Mr. Sorg, contemptuously. "That was deep!"

"Deep, indeed! However, I sent a

letter to 'Mr. Notes' at the St. Denis, and made the appointment yesterday. Our friend came sharp to the minute, and we had a most interesting half hour, with what result you've seen."

"But why did he change his name? Why did he skulk and glance back to see if he were followed? Doesn't it look as though he knew he'd killed some one?"

"That was my first thought; I now believe his explanation. He couldn't have acted that part to-night; he's too innocent, too guileless. No, we were the first to let him hear of the blood he'd shed. As for his alias, and his skulking—inventors are egotists to the point of insanity. This Seton, I warrant you, thinks himself and his airship the two most important things in the world, and was afraid—as he himself said—that his fellow scientist might not be above privily following him, with a larcenous purpose of poaching."

"There will be no arrest?"

"There has been no crime. Certainly the facts would hardly justify a requisition on the Governor at Trenton; to say nothing of dragging into court that poor old man, whose troubles are like to kill him as it is. It means the end of his beloved airship. You remember what he said: 'It is the end'!"

"And it is the end!" cried Mr. Sorg, suddenly, pulling at the elbow of Inspector Val. "Look there!"

They had wheeled into the main road, and were bowling along a good mile or more from the old cottage. Inspector Val cast his eyes to the right and the rear, in the direction indicated by Mr. Sorg. The heavens were painted a bright gold; now and then a serpent tongue of flame licked upward towards the stars.

"Back!" cried Inspector Val.

The disgusted bays came round at a trot, and were again headed for the cottage. Before half the distance had been covered, the bright orange light began to fail and fade, and, when they reached the cottage, the airship and the tinder-like structure that had sheltered it were mere glowing coals and embers. Mr. Seton they found in the room where they first saw him, gazing into the log fire with sadly brooding eyes. The stricken old man—leaden of eye, cheek of chalk—looked up as Inspector Val came in with Mr. Sorg. He evinced no surprise at their return.

"It was I," he said, as though answering a question—"it was I who did it. I put the torch to it myself."

The Stolen White Elephant

CHAPTER I

THE following curious history was related to me by a chance railway acquaintance. He was a gentleman more then seventy years of age, and his thoroughly good and gentle face and earnest and sincere manner imprinted the unmistakable stamp of truth upon every statement which fell from his lips. He said:

You know in what reverence the royal white elephant of Siam is held by the people of that country. You know it is sacred to kings, only kings may possess it, and that it is indeed in a measure even superior to kings, since it receives not merely honor but worship. Very well; five years ago, when the troubles concerning the frontier line arose between Great Britain and Siam, it was presently manifest that Siam had been in the wrong. Therefore every reparation was quickly made, and the British representative stated that he was satisfied and the past should be forgotten. This greatly relieved the King of Siam, and partly as a token of gratitude. but partly also, perhaps, to wipe out any little remaining vestige of unpleasantness which England might feel toward him, he wished to send the Queen a present—the sole sure way of propitiating an enemy, according to Oriental ideas. This present ought not only to be a royal one, but transcendently royal. Wherefore, what offering could be so meet as that of a white elephant? My position in the Indian civil service was such that I was deemed peculiarly worthy of the honor of conveying the present to her Majesty. A ship was fitted out for me and my servants and the officers and attendants of the elephant, and in due time I arrived in New York harbor and placed my royal charge in admirable quarters in Jersey City. It was necessary to remain awhile in order to recruit the animal's health before resuming the voyage.

All went well during a fortnight—then my calamities began. The white elephant was stolen! I was called up at dead of night and informed of this fearful misfortune. For some moments I was beside myself with terror and anxiety; I was helpless. Then I grew calmer and collected my faculties. I soon saw my course—for indeed there was but the one course for an intelligent man to pursue. Late as it was, I flew to New York and got a policeman to conduct me to the headquarters of the detective force. Fortunately I arrived in time, though the chief of the force, the celebrated Inspector Blunt, was just on the point of leaving for his home. He was a man of middle size and compact frame, and when he was thinking deeply he had a way of knitting his brows and tapping his forehead reflectively with his finger, which impressed you at once with the conviction that you stood in the presence of a person of no common order. The very sight of him gave me confidence and made me hopeful. I stated my errand. It did not flurry him in the least; it had no

more visible effect upon his iron self possession than if I had told him somebody had stolen my dog. He motioned me to a seat, and said calmly:

"Allow me to think a moment, please."

So saying, he sat down at his office table and leaned his head upon his hand. Several clerks were at work at the other end of the room; the scratching of their pens was all the sound I heard during the next six or seven minutes. Meantime the inspector sat there, buried in thought. Finally he raised his head, and there was that in the firm lines of his face which showed me that his brain had done its work and his plan was made. Said he—and his voice was low and impressive—

"This is no ordinary case. Every step must be warily taken; each step must be made sure before the next is ventured. And secrecy must be observed—secrecy profound and absolute. Speak to no one about the matter, not even the reporters. I will take care of *them;* I will see that they get only what it may suit my ends to let them know." He touched a bell; a youth appeared. "Alaric, tell the reporters to remain for the present." The boy retired. "Now let us proceed to business—and systematically. Nothing can be accomplished in this trade of mine without strict and minute method."

He took a pen and some paper. "Now—name of the elephant?"

"Hassan Ben Ali Ben Selim Abdallah Mohammed Moisé Alhammal Jamsetjejeebhoy Dhuleep Sultain Ebu Bhudpoor."

"Very well. Given name?"

"Jumbo."

"Very well. Place of birth?"

"The capital city of Siam."

"Parents living?"

"No—dead."

"Had they any other issue besides this one?"

"None. He was an only child."

"Very well. These matters are sufficient under that head. Now please describe the elephant, and leave out no particular, however insignificant—that is, insignificant from *your* point of view. To men in my profession there *are* no insignificant particulars; they do not exist."

I described—he wrote. When I was done, he said:

"Now listen. If I have made any mistakes, correct me."

He read as follows:

"Height, 19 feet; length from apex of forehead to insertion of tail, 26 feet; length of trunk, 16 feet; length of tail, 6 feet; total length, including trunk and tail, 48 feet; length of tusks, 9½ feet; ears in keeping with these dimensions; footprint resembles the mark left when one upends a barrel in the snow; color of the elephant, a dull white; has a hole the size of a plate in each ear for the insertion of jewelry, and possesses the habit in a remarkable degree of squirting water upon spectators and of maltreating with his trunk not only such persons as he is acquainted with, but even entire strangers; limps slightly with his right hind leg, and has a small scar in his left armpit caused by a former boil; had on, when stolen, a castle containing seats for fifteen persons, and a gold-cloth saddle-blanket the size of an ordinary carpet."

There were no mistakes. The inspec-

tor touched the bell, handed the description to Alaric, and said:

"Have fifty thousand copies of this printed at once and mailed to every detective office and pawnbroker's shop on the continent." Alaric retired. "There—so far, so good. Next, I must have a photograph of the property."

I gave him one. He examined it critically, and said:

"It must do, since we can do no better; but he has his trunk curled up and tucked into his mouth. That is unfortunate, and is calculated to mislead, for of course he does not usually have it in that position." He touched his bell.

"Alaric, have fifty thousand copies of this photograph made, the first thing in the morning, and mail them with the descriptive circulars."

Alaric retired to execute his orders. The inspector said:

"It will be necessary to offer a reward, of course. Now as to the amount?"

"What sum would you suggest?"

"To *begin* with, I should say—well, twenty-five thousand dollars. It is an intricate and difficult business; there are a thousand avenues of escape and opportunities of concealment. These thieves have friends and pals everywhere—"

"Bless me, do you know who they are?"

The wary face, practiced in concealing the thoughts and feelings within, gave me no token, nor yet the replying words, so quietly uttered:

"Never mind about that. I may, and I may not. We generally gather a pretty shrewd inkling of who our man is by the manner of his work and the size of the game he goes after. We are not dealing with a pickpocket or a hall thief, now, make up your mind to that. This property was not "lifted" by a novice. But, as I was saying, considering the amount of travel which will have to be done, and the diligence with which the thieves will cover up their traces as they move along, twenty-five thousand may be too small a sum to offer, yet I think it worth while to start with that."

So we determined upon that figure, as a beginning. Then this man, whom nothing escaped which could by any possibility be made to serve as a clue, said:

"There are cases in detective history to show that criminals have been detected through peculiarities in their appetites. Now, what does this elephant eat, and how much?"

"Well, as to *what* he eats—he will eat *anything*. He will eat a man, he will eat a Bible—he will eat anything *between* a man and a Bible."

"Good—very good indeed, but too general. Details are necessary—details are the only valuable things in our trade. Very well—as to men. At one meal—or, if you prefer, during one day—how many men will he eat, if fresh?"

"He would not care whether they were fresh or not; at a single meal he could eat five ordinary men."

"Very good; five men; we will put that down. What nationalities would he prefer?"

"He is indifferent about nationalities. He prefers acquaintances, but is not prejudiced against strangers."

"Very good. Now, as to Bible. How

many Bibles would he eat at a meal?"

"He would eat an entire edition."

"It is hardly succinct enough. Do you mean an ordinary octavo, or the family illustrated?"

"I think he would be indifferent to illustrations; that is, I think he would not value illustrations above simple letter-press."

"No, you do not get my idea. I refer to bulk. The ordinary octavo Bible weighs about two pounds and a half, while the great quarto with the illustrations weighs ten or twelve. How many Doré Bibles would he eat at a meal?"

"If you knew this elephant, you would not ask. He would take what they had."

"Well, put it in dollars and cents, then. We must get at it somehow. The Dorè costs a hundred dollars a copy, Russia leather, bevelled."

"He would require about fifty thousand dollars' worth—say an edition of five hundred copies."

"Now that is more exact. I will put that down. Very well; he likes men and Bibles; so far, so good. What else will he eat? I want particulars."

"He will leave Bibles to eat bricks, he will leave bricks to eat bottles, he will leave bottles to eat clothing, he will leave clothing to eat cats, he will leave cats to eat oysters, he will leave oysters to eat ham, he will leave ham to eat sugar, he will leave sugar to eat pie, he will leave pie to eat potatoes, he will leave potatoes to eat bran, he will leave bran to eat hay, he will leave hay to eat oats, he will leave oats to eat rice, for he was mainly raised on it. There is nothing whatever that he will not eat but European butter, and he would eat that if he could taste it."

"Very good. General quantity at a meal—say about——"

"Well, anywhere from a quarter to half a ton."

"And he drinks——"

"Everything that is fluid. Milk, water, whiskey, molasses, castor oil, camphene, carbolic acid—it is no use to go into particulars; whatever fluid occurs to you set it down. He will drink anything that is fluid, except European coffee."

"Very good. As to quantity?"

"Put it down five to fifteen barrels —his thirst varies; his other appetites do not."

"These things are unusual. They ought to furnish quite good clues toward tracing him."

He touched the bell.

"Alaric, summon Captain Burns."

Burns appeared. Inspector Blunt unfolded the whole matter to him, detail by detail. Then he said in the clear, decisive tones of a man whose plans are clearly defined in his head, and who is accustomed to command:

"Captain Burns, detail Detectives Jones, Davis, Halsey, Bates and Hackett to shadow the elephant."

"Yes, sir."

"Detail Detectives Moses, Dakin, Murphy, Rogers, Tupper, Higgins, and Bartholomew to shadow the thieves."

"Yes, sir."

"Place a strong guard—a guard of thirty picked men, with a relief of thirty —over the place from whence the elephant was stolen, to keep strict watch there night and day, and allow none

to approach—except reporters—without written authority from me."

"Yes, sir."

"Place detectives in plain clothes in the railway, steamship, and ferry depots, and upon all roadways leading out of Jersey City, with orders to search all suspicious persons."

"Yes, sir."

"Furnish all these men with photograph and accompanying description of the elephant, and instruct them to search all trains and outgoing ferry boats and other vessels."

"Yes, sir."

"If the elephant should be found, let him be seized and the information forwarded to me by telegraph."

"Yes, sir."

"Let me be informed at once if any clues should be found—footprints of the animal, or anything of that kind."

"Yes, sir."

"Get an order commanding the harbor police to patrol the frontages vigilantly."

"Yes, sir."

"Dispatch detectives in plain clothes over all the railways, north as far as Canada, west as far as Ohio, south as far as Washington."

"Yes, sir."

"Place experts in all the telegraph offices to listen to all messages; and let them require that all cipher dispatches be interpreted to them."

"Yes, sir."

"Report to me promptly at the usual hour."

"Yes, sir."

"Go!"

"Yes, sir."

He was gone.

Inspector Blunt was silent and thoughtful a moment, while the fire in his eye cooled down and faded out. Then he turned to me and said in a placid voice:

"I am not given to boasting, it is not my habit; but—we shall find the elephant."

I shook him warmly by the hand and thanked him; and I *felt* my thanks, too. The more I had seen of the man the more I liked him, and the more I admired him and marveled over the mysterious wonders of his profession. Then we parted for the night, and I went home with a far happier heart than I had carried with me to his office.

CHAPTER II

Next morning it was all in the newspapers, in the minutest detail. It even had additions—consisting of Detective This, Detective That, and Detective The Other's "Theory" as to how the robbery was done, who the robbers were, and whither they had flown with their booty. There were eleven of these theories, and they covered all the possibilities; and this single fact shows what independent thinkers detectives are. No two theories were alike, or even much resembled each other, save in one striking particular, and in that one all the eleven theories were absolutely agreed. That was, that although the rear of my building was torn out and the only door remained locked, the elephant had not been removed through the rent, but by some other (undiscovered) outlet. All agreed that the robbers had made that rent only to mislead the detectives. That never would have occurred to me

or to any other layman, perhaps, but it had not deceived the detectives for a moment. Thus, what I had supposed was the only thing that had no mystery about it was in fact the very thing I had gone further astray in. The eleven theories all named the supposed robbers, but no two named the same robbers; the total number of suspected persons was thirty-seven. The various newspaper accounts all closed with the most important opinion of all—that of Chief Inspector Blunt. A portion of this statement read as follows:

"The chief knows who the two principals are, namely, 'Brick' Duffy and 'Red' McFadden. Ten days before the robbery was achieved he was already aware that it was to be attempted, and had quietly proceeded to shadow these two noted villains; but unfortunately on the night in question their track was lost, and before it could be found again the bird was flown,—that is, the elephant.

"Duffy and McFadden are the boldest scoundrels in the profession; the chief has reasons for believing that they are the men who stole the stove out of the detective headquarters on a bitter night last winter,—in consequence of which the chief and every detective present were in the hands of the physicians before morning, some with frozen feet, others with frozen fingers, ears, and other members."

When I read the first half of that I was more astonished than ever at the wonderful sagacity of this strange man. He not only saw everything in the present with a clear eye, but even the future could not be hidden from him. I was soon at his office, and said I could not help wishing he had had those men arrested, and so prevented the trouble and loss; but his reply was simple and unanswerable:

"It is not our province to prevent crime, but to punish it. We cannot punish it until it is committed."

I remarked that the secrecy which he had begun had been marred by the newspapers; not only all our facts but all our plans had been revealed; even all the suspected persons had been named; these would doubtless disguise themselves now, or go into hiding.

"Let them. They will find that when I am ready for them my hand will descend upon them, in their secret places, as unerringly as the hand of fate. As to the newspapers, we *must* keep in with them. Fame, reputation, constant public mention—these are the detective's bread and butter. He must publish his facts, else he will be supposed to have none; he must publish his theory, for nothing is so strange or striking as a detective's theory, or brings him so much wondering respect; we must publish our plans, for these the journals insist upon having, and we could not deny them without offending. We must constantly show the public what we are doing, or they will believe we are doing nothing. It is much pleasanter to have a newspaper say, 'Inspector Blunt's ingenious and extraordinary theory is as follows,' than to have it say some harsh thing, or, worse still, some sarcastic one."

"I see the force of what you say. But I noticed that in one part of your remarks in the papers this morning you

refused to reveal your opinion upon a certain minor point."

"Yes, we always do that; it has a good effect. Besides, I had not formed any opinion on that point, anyway."

I deposited a considerable sum of money with the inspector, to meet current expenses, and sat down to wait for news. We are expecting the telegrams to begin to arrive at any moment now. Meantime I re-read the newspapers and also our descriptive circular, and observed that our $25,000 reward seemed to be offered only to detectives. I said I thought it ought to be offered to anybody who would catch the elephant. The inspector said:

"It is the detectives who will find the elephant, hence the reward will go to the right place. If other people found the animal, it would only be by watching the detectives and taking advantage of clues and indications stolen from them, and that would entitle the detectives to the reward, after all. The proper office of a reward is to stimulate the men who deliver up their time and their trained sagacities to this sort of work, and not to confer benefits upon chance citizens who stumble upon a capture without having earned the benefits by their own merits and labors."

This was reasonable enough, certainly. Now the telegraphic machine in the corner began to click, and the following dispatch was the result:

Flower Station, N. Y., 7:30 A. M.

Have got a clew. Found a succession of deep tracks across a farm near here. Followed them two miles east without result; think elephant went west. Shall now shadow him in that direction. DARLEY, *Detective.*

"Darley's one of the best men on the force," said the inspector. "We shall hear from him again before long."

Telegram No. 2 came:—

Barker's, N. J., 7:40 A. M.

Just arrived. Glass factory broken open here during night and eight hundred bottles taken. Only water in large quantity near here is five miles distant. Shall strike for there. Elephant will be thirsty. Bottles were empty.

BAKER, *Detective.*

"That promises well, too," said the inspector. "I told you the creature's appetites would not be bad clews."

Telegram No. 3:—

Taylorville, L. I., 8:15 A. M.

A haystack near here disappeared during the night. Probably eaten. Have got a clew, and am off.

HUBBARD, *Detective.*

"How he does move around!" said the inspector. "I knew we had a difficult job on hand, but we shall catch him yet."

Flower Station, N. Y., 9 A. M.

Shadowed the tracks three miles westward. Large, deep, and ragged. Have just met a farmer who says they are not elephant tracks. Says they are holes where he dug up saplings for shade-trees when ground was frozen last winter. Give me orders how to proceed.

DARLEY, *Detective.*

"Aha! a confederate of the thieves! The thing grows warm" said the inspector.

He dictated the following telegram to Darley:

Arrest the man and force him to name his pals. Continue to follow the tracks,—to the Pacific, if necessary.

Chief BLUNT.

Next telegram:—

Coney Point, Pa., 8:45 A. M.

Gas office broken open here during night and three months' unpaid gas bills taken. Have got a clew and am away.

MURPHY, *Detective.*

"Heavens!" said the inspector; "would he eat gas bills?"

"Through ignorance—yes; but they cannot support life. At least, unassisted."

Now came this exciting telegram:—

Ironville, N. Y., 9:30 A. M.

Just arrived. This village in consternation. Elephant passed through here at five this morning. Some say he went east, some say west, some north, some south,—but all say they did not wait to notice particularly. He killed a horse; have secured a piece of it for a clew. Killed it with his trunk; from style of blow, think he struck it left-handed. From position in which horse lies, think elephant traveled northward along line of Berkley railway. Has four and a half hours' start, but I move on his track at once.

HAWES, *Detective.*

I uttered exclamations of joy. The inspector was as self-contained as a graven image. He calmly touched his bell.

"Alaric, send Captain Burns here."

Burns appeared.

"How many men are ready for instant orders?"

"Ninety-six, sir."

"Send them north at once. Let them concentrate along the line of the Berkley road north of Ironville."

"Yes, sir."

"Let them conduct their movements with the utmost secrecy. As fast as others are at liberty, hold them for orders."

"Yes, sir."

"Go!"

"Yes, sir."

Presently came another telegram:—

Sage Corners, N. Y., 10:30.

Just arrived. Elephant passed through here at 8:15. All escaped from the town but a policeman. Apparently elephant did not strike at policeman, but at the lamp-post. Got both. I have secured a portion of the policeman as clew.

STUMM, *Detective.*

"So the elephant has turned westward," said the inspector. "However, he will not escape, for my men are scattered all over that region."

The next telegram said:—

Glover's, 11:15.

Just arrived. Village deserted, except sick and aged. Elephant passed through three-quarters of an hour ago. The anti-temperance mass meeting was in

session; he put his trunk in at a window and washed it out with water from cistern. Some swallowed it—since dead; several drowned. Detectives Cross and O'Shaughnessy were passing through town, but going south,—so missed elephant. Whole region for many miles around in terror,—people flying from their homes. Wherever they turn they meet elephant, and many are killed.

BRANT, *Detective.*

I could have shed tears, this havoc so distressed me. But the inspector only said,—

"You see,—we are closing in on him, He feels our presence; he has turned eastward again."

Yet further troublous news was in store for us. The telegraph brought this:—

Hoganport, 12:19.

Just arrived. Elephant passed through half an hour ago, creating wildest fright and excitement. Elephant raged around streets; two plumbers going by, killed one—other escaped. Regret general.

O'FLAHERTY, *Detective.*

"Now he is right in the midst of my men," said the inspector. "Nothing can save him."

A succession of telegrams came from detectives who were scattered through New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and who were following clews consisting of ravaged barns, factories, and Sunday School libraries, with high hopes,—hopes amounting to certainties, indeed. The inspector said,—

"I wish I could communicate with them and order them north, but that is impossible. A detective only visits a telegraph office to send his report; then he is off again, and you don't know where to put your hand on him."

Now came this despatch:—

Bridgeport, Ct., 12:15.

Barnum offers rate of $4,000 a year for exclusive privilege of using elephant as traveling advertising medium from now until detectives find him. Wants to paste circus-posters on him. Desires immediate answer.

BOGGS, *Detective.*

"That is perfectly absurd!" I exclaimed.

"Of course it is," said the inspector. "Evidently Mr. Barnum, who thinks he is so sharp, does not know me,—but I know him."

Then he dictated this answer to the despatch:

Mr. Barnum's offer declined. Make it $7,000 or nothing.

Chief BLUNT.

"There. We shall not have to wait long for an answer. Mr. Barnum is not at home; he is in the telegraph office,—it is his way when he has business on hand. Inside of three——"

DONE—P. T. BARNUM

So interrupted the clicking telegraphic instrument. Before I could make a comment upon this extraordinary episode, the following despatch carried my thoughts into another and very distressing channel:—

Bolivia, N. Y., 12:50.

Elephant arrived here from the south and passed through toward the forest at 11:50, dispersing a funeral on the way, and diminishing the mourners by two. Citizens fired some small cannon-balls into him, and then fled. Detective Burke and I arrived ten minutes later, from the north, but mistook some excavations for footprints, and so lost a good deal of time; but at last we struck the right trail and followed it to the woods. We then got down on our hands and knees and continued to keep a sharp eye on the track, and so shadowed it into the brush. Burke was in advance. Unfortunately the animal had stopped to rest; therefore, Burke having his head down, intent upon the track, butted up against the elephant's hind legs before he was aware of his vicinity. Burke instantly arose to his feet, seized the tail, and exclaimed joyfully, "I claim the re——" but got no further, for a single blow of the huge trunk laid the brave fellow's fragments low in death. I fled rearward, and the elephant turned and shadowed me to the edge of the wood, making tremendous speed, and I should inevitably have been lost, but the remains of the funeral providentially intervened again and diverted his attention. I have just learned that nothing of that funeral is now left; but this is no loss, for there is an abundance of material for another. Meantime, the elephant has disappeared again.

MULROONEY, *Detective.*

We heard no news except from the diligent and confident detectives scattered about New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Virginia,—who were all following fresh and encouraging clews, —until shortly after 2 P. M., when this telegram came:—

Baxter Centre, 2:15.

Elephant been here, plastered over with circus-bills, and broke up a revival, striking down and damaging many who were on the point of entering upon a better life. Citizens penned him up, and established a guard. When Detective Brown and I arrived, some time after, we entered enclosure and proceeded to identify elephant by photograph and description. All marks tallied exactly except one, which we could not see,—the boil-scar under armpit. To make sure, Brown crept under to look, and was immediately brained,—that is, head crushed and destroyed, though nothing issued from debris. All fled; so did elephant, striking right and left with much effect. Has escaped, but left bold blood-track from cannon-wounds. Rediscovery certain. He broke southward, through a dense forest.

BRENT, *Detective.*

That was the last telegram. At nightfall a fog shut down which was so dense that objects but three feet away could not be discerned. This lasted all night. The ferry-boats and even the omnibuses had to stop running.

CHAPTER III

NEXT morning the papers were as full of detective theories as before; they had all our tragic facts in detail also, and a great many more which they had received from their telegraphic corre-

spondents. Column after column was occupied, a third of its way down, with glaring head-lines, which it made my heart sick to read. Their general tone was like this:—

"The White Elephant at Large! He Moves Upon His Fatal March! Whole Villages Deserted by Their Fright-Stricken Occupants! Pale Terror Goes Before Him, Death and Devastation Follow After! After these, the detectives. Barns Destroyed, Factories Gutted, Harvests Devoured, Public Assemblages Dispersed, Accompanied by Scenes of Carnage Impossible to Describe! Theories of Thirty-four of the Most Distinguished Detectives on the Force! Theory of Chief Blunt!"

"There!" said Inspector Blunt, almost betrayed into excitement, "this is magnificent! This is the greatest windfall that any detective organization ever had. The fame of it will travel to the ends of the earth, and endure to the end of time, and my name with it."

But there was no joy for me. I felt as if I had committed all those red crimes, and that the elephant was only my irresponsible agent. And how the list had grown! In one place he had "interfered with an election and killed five repeaters." He had followed this act with the destruction of two poor fellows, named O'Donohue and McFlannigan, who had "found a refuge in the home of the oppressed of all lands only the day before, and were in the act of exercising for the first time the noble right of American citizens at the polls, when stricken down by the relentless hand of the Scourge of Siam." In another, he had "found a crazy sensation-preacher preparing his next season's heroic attacks on the dance, the theatre, and other things which can't strike back, and had stepped on him." And in still another place he had "killed a lightning-rod agent." And so the list went on, growing redder and redder, and more and more heart-breaking. Sixty persons had been killed, and two hundred and forty wounded. All the accounts bore just testimony to the activity and devotion of the detectives, and all closed with the remark that "three hundred thousand citizens and four detectives saw the dread creature, and two of the latter he destroyed."

I dreaded to hear the telegraphic instrument begin to click again. By and by the messages began to pour in, but I was happily disappointed in their nature. It was soon apparent that all trace of the elephant was lost. The fog had enabled him to search out a good hiding-place unobserved. Telegrams from the most absurdly distant points reported that a dim vast mass had been glimpsed there through the fog at such and such an hour, and was "undoubtedly the elephant." This dim vast mass had been glimpsed in New Haven, in New Jersey, in Pennsylvania, in interior New York, in Brooklyn, and even in the city of New York itself! But in all cases the dim vast mass had vanished quickly and left no trace. Every detective of the large force scattered over this huge extent of country sent his hourly report, and each and every one of them had a clew, and was shadowing something, and was hot upon the heels of it.

But the day passed without other result.

The next day the same.

The next just the same.

The newspaper reports began to grow monotonous with facts that amounted to nothing, clews which led to nothing, and theories which had nearly exhausted the elements which surprise and delight and dazzle.

By advice of the inspector I doubled the reward.

Four more dull days followed. Then came a bitter blow to the poor, hard-working detectives,—the journalists declined to print their theories, and coldly said, "Give us a rest."

Two weeks after the elephant's disappearance I raised the reward to $75,000 by the inspector's advice. It was a great sum, but I felt that I would rather sacrifice my whole private fortune than lose my credit with my government. Now that the detectives were in adversity, the newspapers turned upon them, and began to fling the most stinging sarcasms at them. This gave the minstrels an idea, and they dressed themselves as detectives and hunted the elephant on the stage in the most extravagant way. The caricaturists made pictures of detectives scanning the country with spy-glasses, while the elephant, at their backs, stole apples out of their pockets. And they made all sorts of ridiculous pictures of the detective badge,—you have seen that badge printed in gold on the back of detective novels, no doubt,—it is a wide-staring eye, with the legend, "We Never Sleep." When detectives called for a drink, the would-be facetious bar-keeper resurrected an obsolete form of expression and said, "Will you have an eye-opener?" All the air was thick with sarcasms.

But there was one man who moved calm, untouched, unaffected, through it all. It was that heart of oak, the Chief Inspector. His brave eye never dwarfed, his serene confidence never wavered. He always said,—

"Let them rail on; he laughs best who laughs last."

My admiration for the man grew into a species of worship. I was at his side always. His office had become an unpleasant place to me, and now became daily more and more so. Yet if he could endure it I meant to do so also; at least, as long as I could. So I came regularly, and stayed,—the only outsider who seemed to be capable of it. Everbody wondered how I could; and often it seemed to me that I must desert, but at such times I looked into that calm and apparently unconscious face, and held my ground.

About three weeks after the elephant's disappearance I was about to say, one morning, that I should *have* to strike my colors and retire, when the great detective arrested the thought by proposing one more superb and masterly move.

This was to compromise with the robbers. The fertility of this man's invention exceeded anything I have ever seen, and I have had a wide intercourse with the world's finest minds. He said he was confident he could compromise for $100,000 and recover the elephant. I said I believed I could scrape the amount together, but what would become of the poor detectives who had worked so faithfully? He said,—

"In compromise they always get half."

This removed my only objection. So

the inspector wrote two notes, in this form:—

> Dear Madam,—Your husband can make a large sum of money (and be entirely protected from the law) by making an immediate appointment with me. *Chief* Blunt.

He sent one of these by his confidential messenger to the "reputed wife" of Brick Duffy, and the other to the reputed wife of Red McFadden.

Within the hour these offensive answers came:

> Ye Owld Fool: brick McDuffys bin ded 2 yere. Bridget Mahoney.
>
> Chief Bat,—Red McFadden is hung and in heving 18 month. Any Ass but a dective knose that.
>
> Mary O'Hooligan.

"I had long suspected these facts," said the inspector; "this testimony proves the unerring accuracy of my instinct."

The moment one resource failed him he was ready with another. He immediately wrote an advertisement for the morning papers, and I kept a copy of it:—

> A.—xwblv. 242 N. Tjnd—fz-328wmlg. Ozpo,—; 2 m! ogw. Mum.

He said that if the thief was alive this would bring him to the usual rendezvous. He further explained that the usual rendezvous was a place where all business affairs between detectives and criminals were conducted. This meeting would take place at twelve the next night.

We could do nothing till then, and I lost no time in getting out of the office, and was grateful indeed for the privilege.

At 11 the next night I brought $100,000 in banknotes and put them into the chief's hands, and shortly afterward he took his leave, with the brave old undimmed confidence in his eye. An almost intolerable hour dragged to a close; then I heard his welcome tread, and rose gasping and tottered to meet him. How his fine eyes flamed with triumph! He said,—

"We've compromised! The jokers will sing a different tune tomorrow! Follow me!"

He took a lighted candle and strode down into the vast vaulted basement where sixty detectives always slept, and where a score were now playing cards to while the time. I followed close after him. He walked swiftly down to the dim remote end of the place, and just as I succumbed to the pangs of suffocation and was swooning away he stumbled and fell over the outlying members of a mighty object, and I heard him exclaim as he went down,—

"Our noble profession is vindicated. Here is your elephant!"

I was carried to the office above and restored with carbolic acid. The whole detective force swarmed in, and such another season of triumphant rejoicing ensued as I had never witnessed before. The reporters were called, baskets of champagne were opened, toasts were drunk, the handshakings and congratulations were continuous and enthusiastic. Naturally the chief was the hero of the hour, and his happiness was so complete and had been so patiently and worthily and bravely won that it made me happy to see it, though

I stood there a homeless beggar, my priceless charge dead, and my position in my country's service lost to me through what would always seem my fatally careless execution of a great trust. Many an eloquent eye testified its deep admiration for the chief, and many a detective's voice murmured, "Look at him,—just the king of the profession,—only give him a clew, it's all he wants, and there ain't anything hid that he can't find." The dividing of the $50,000 made great pleasure; when it was finished the chief made a little speech while he put his share in his pocket, in which he said, "Enjoy it, boys, for you've earned it; and more than that you've earned for the detective profession undying fame."

A telegram arrived, which read:—

> Monroe, Mich., 10 P.M.
>
> First time I've struck a telegraph office in over three weeks. Have followed those footprints, horseback, through the woods, a thousand miles to here, and they get stronger and bigger and fresher every day. Don't worry—inside of another week I'll have the elephant. This is dead sure.
>
> DARLEY, *Detective.*

The chief ordered three cheers for "Darley, one of the finest minds on the force," and then commanded that he be telegraphed to come home and receive his share of the reward.

So ended that marvellous episode of the stolen elephant. The newspapers were pleasant with praises once more, the next day, with one contemptible exception. This sheet said, "Great is the detective! He may be a little slow in finding a little thing like a mislaid elephant,—he may hunt him all day and sleep with his rotting carcass all night for three weeks, but he will find him at last—if he can get the man who mislaid him to show him the place!"

Poor Hassan was lost to me forever. The cannonshots had wounded him fatally, he had crept to that unfriendly place in the fog, and there, surrounded by his enemies and in constant danger of detection, he had wasted away with hunger and suffering till death gave him peace.

The compromise cost me $100,000; my detective expenses were $42,000 more; I never applied for a place under my government; I am a ruined man and a wanderer in the earth,—but my admiration for that man, whom I believe to be the greatest detective the world has ever produced, remains undimmed to this day, and will so remain unto the end.

The Law Beaters

"Pass over the bottle, Repton," the small man said. "Pass it over here before you drink it all."

The big man took the bottle from his lips. His great, flat, white face, like a pillow with eyes, twitched in a wry grimace.

"Vile stuff," he grunted. "Worse than the first bottle, even."

The small man took a long drink.

"Ugh!" he sputtered. "Molten pig iron! Still—it has a kick, and a kick is what we're after tonight, eh, Repton?"

"Yes, a kick is what we're after," agreed the big man and spat out a sharp oath.

"He charged me thirty bucks a bottle for this varnish," he growled. "The dirty, cheap thief. I hate a petty grafter."

"Who doesn't?" said the small man. "But why kick? He might have turned us down cold, you know. Looking at it one way, we're lucky to have even this rat poison."

"Oh, stop being philosophic, Shreve," the big man said, "and give me another drink."

"It's bucked me up some," said Shreve, handing back the bottle. "Here's a toast for you, Repton: 'To the law of the land!'"

Repton laughed a jarring laugh. "The law!" he cried. "That's rich, that is. The law! We've got a lot of jokes in this funny country of ours, Shreve, but the law is the biggest laugh of any of them, I know."

"Lawyer, aren't you?"

"Yes," Repton answered, "and a good one. Say, this stuff is beginning to warm me up."

"Good," said Shreve. "You were pretty low a while ago."

"I don't exactly feel like doing a song and dance now," Repton said, "but I do feel better." He suddenly chuckled without mirth. "In my time, Shreve," he said, his voice growing thicker, "I've got away with a few things."

"I'll bet you have," said Shreve. "Some fast ones."

"Why not?" said Repton. "Everybody does. Why, in this enlightened country of ours the law goes around begging to be beaten."

"Yes, I know," said Shreve. "I know all about that. But sometimes a fellow's foot slips, and they get him."

"His fault. Stupidity."

"Or just plain bad luck," said Shreve.

"In very few cases, yes." Repton agreed. "But mostly the man who gets caught is just dumb. Anybody, with even a slight trace of brains, should be able to out-smart the police. Ever know any cops?"

"A few," said Shreve.

"Intellectual giants, weren't they?"

"Not exactly."

"Of course not," said Repton. "If a

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man had brains enough to be a really good policeman, he'd be something else. Who but a thick turkey would flatten his feet on a beat for thirty a week—or maybe forty—if he lives that long? And American detectives! What a fine lot of stumblebums they are. Too old or fat to pound the pavements. They couldn't follow an elephant up a one-way alley."

"Well," remarked Shreve, "maybe you're right—but somehow the jails manage to keep pretty well filled."

"What with?" demanded Repton. "Green kids. Amateurs. Feeble old-timers. Where are the real, high-class professional crooks in America today? In cells? Not they. They're sitting around in white linen knickers on the porches of respectable country clubs, as free as air, planning new puzzles for the police to stub their two-by-four minds on."

Shreve laughed.

"You're a lawyer. You ought to know," he said. "Still and all, the criminal courts always have plenty of work to do."

"The courts!" said Repton. "Comic supplements, they are. The real big-timers who break the law aren't afraid of the courts. To them a trial is just a minor nuisance, like having a tooth filled. Take an instance: Suppose some burglar gets careless, and as he is leaving the scene of the crime bumps into a policeman and wakes him up and gets arrested. The newspaper boys play it up as a marvelous piece of scientific crime detection. It's the old army game. A column when the cops happen to bag a man; half an inch when he gets away. Well, anyhow, luck is against our friend the burglar, and he's been caught with the diamonds in his vest pocket. Then what?"

"Another job for the lawyers!"

"Just that. The wheels of justice begin to grind. Believe me, Shreve, the rattle-trap windmill we call justice is a mighty creaky and old-fashioned machine, with a lot of loose bolts and nuts. It doesn't take a very big monkey wrench, properly thrown, to wreck it."

"I've seen it done," put in Shreve.

"Well," went on Repton, "they may finally bring our burglar to trial. Chances are the district attorney is blown right out of court, or his case is so riddled with holes and punctured with technicalities that it won't hold water when it's appealed. Well, at last, with the jolly taxpayer footing the bill, the trial is over and the jury gets the case. And what's a jury?"

"I can't tell you without using bad language," said Shreve.

"A jury," said Repton, "consists of a dozen bright citizens who don't read the newspapers or discuss what is going on, and who haven't any opinions and whose opinions wouldn't be worth anything if they did have some. A lawyer, with a tongue in his head, can persuade 'em that cows fly. The unanimous-verdict idea is a great help too. Take any twelve men, and one of 'em is sure to be a Judas. I mean a fellow who will listen to reason and who will force a disagreement and a new trial. Especially in a small town."

"Sure," said Shreve. "You're right. You've got to know what side your toast is buttered on."

"I did," said Repton. "I was born with my eyes open. I played it right.

Say—I'm getting a bit woozy from all this hooch."

"So am I," said Shreve. "But what does it matter?"

"It doesn't," said Repton. "Here—give me another shot."

As the big man drank Shreve paced up and down, his gait slightly unsteady.

"Yes," he broke out, "the law's a laugh. It's a humpty-dumpty thing, all right. I found that out."

"By the way, Shreve," Repton said, "what's your profession?"

"Live by my wits," answered Shreve.

"Meaning, I suppose, by other people's lack of them."

Shreve grinned.

"Put it that way if you like," he said. "After all, the world is divided into the hawks and sparrows—so you might as well be a hawk. Anyhow, I always have had plenty of gravy."

"From New York, aren't you?"

"Yes. The biggest hick town. You know all about me, I expect."

"Oh, I've heard a few things about you," said Repton. "You're not exactly a total stranger, you know. We were sort of expecting you. Of course, the accounts I have had of you may be a bit garbled. I'd like to get the straight facts. Might as well tell them to me. I'm not apt to broadcast them."

A half grin creased Shreve's narrow face.

"I guess I can trust you all right," he said. "Anyhow, booze always did make me trusting. That's my weakness."

Shreve poured a drink down his throat, gagged and shivered.

"I'll tell you," he said. "Why not? I was with a mob—at first. After they chucked me out of college, and my dad threw me out, I had to do something. My specialty was steering college sports to a poker game. I had a liberal education in all the rackets—from gold brick to badger. Then I went into business on my own. I always like to work alone. I don't believe in splitting profits or secrets. I did a bit in the oilless oil stock line, until a federal dick almost landed me in the big stone house—but not quite." Shreve sniggered. "After that," he said, "I never got into trouble. I piled up some jack and some pull, and I snapped my fingers at the cops and the courts. I worked a lot of games—some old, some new. Of course I didn't go at things bull-headed. I worked my plans out to the smallest detail. That's the only way."

Repton nodded.

"Yes," he said, "that's the only way."

"That's what I did in the biggest job I ever pulled," Shreve said. "When I found I had to do it, I figured every angle. It wasn't in my line, but it had to be done."

"I know," said Repton. "When you get in a tight corner, you've got to get out—no matter how."

"Yes, it had to be done," repeated Shreve. "I was working an old dodge. Funny how simple-minded some successful merchants are, isn't it? I'd call up one of the biggest jewelry stores on Fifth Avenue, and putting on my society voice would say, 'This is Mrs. Roger Rogers' secretary speaking. Mrs. Rogers wants to select a diamond bracelet for her daughter's birthday, but she cannot come to your store, as she is ill in bed, so will you kindly send a selection of your best bracelets to her

home on Park avenue at three this afternoon?'

"Well, I guess you've heard of Mrs. Rogers. She's all coin and blue blood —and, what's more she pays her bills promptly, so naturally the jeweler sent up a dozen of his most expensive bracelets by special messenger. Her house has a sort of vestibule, and when the messenger got there, who should meet him in the vestibule but yours truly, J. Burton Shreve, all dolled up in a cutaway coat, with a gardenia in his buttonhole, a monocle in his eye, and no hat—as if I'd just stepped out the front door to meet him. I gave my best imitation of a smooty social secretary and said I'd sign for the package, as Mrs. Rogers was asleep. Of course he fell for it. He went away with the receipt, and as soon as he had turned the corner I went the other way with the package."

Shreve paused and frowned. "It was a lot my fault what happened," he said. "But I'm a sociable sort of fellow, and I liked Lannin. He moved into the quiet apartment hotel where I lived in West Forty-seventh Street—right next door to me. We got to chatting about dogs, and pretty soon we were pals. He was a stranger in town—from Los Angeles—and he liked a good time and had plenty of the stuff that good times are made of, so I showed him the town. I was taking a vacation at the time. We played the race tracks and cabarets and hide-aways together. Lannin was the best company in the world. We'd been hanging out together for a couple of months before Lannin got confidential, being well oiled at the moment, and sort of let it slip out that he had come east because he and the Coast cops had been playing tag and he was tired of being 'it.' He gave me a fairly strong hint that he was an expert rubber-check passer. Of course that made the bond between us all the closer. He spoke my language, as the saying goes. I came across with a few interesting facts about myself and even went so far as to propose that he and I should do a job together. He said that would suit him fine. I was a fool, but this fifteen-minute-old rye loosens up a man's tongue."

"It does that," said Repton. "Give me another drag on that bottle."

"A couple of days later," said Shreve, "I ran into 'Count' Giraldi, who makes his sugar playing cards on the big liners. He'd been one of my mob years before. 'Say,' he said to me, 'have you turned foolish, or what ails you?' 'Come again,' I said. 'Who was the handsome stranger I saw you with in Tony's last night?' he said. 'A regular from the Coast,' I said. 'Lannin—Harry Lannin. Why?'

" 'Lannin?' said the Count. 'Lannin, my eye! Vogel's his name—Jason Vogel—and the last time I saw him he was making it nasty for a little friend of mine who tried to bring some diamonds into the country in her hot-water bag.' 'You mean he's a dick?' I said. 'A damn clever one,' said the Count. 'He's his own agency, see. Always works alone. Mostly for the big jewelers' protective association. If you're not sticking on the sunny side of the law, look out for him.' 'You must have him wrong,' I said, feeling pretty sick. 'But thanks for the tip.'

"I went straight back to my flat. I

didn't want to believe that Lannin was a double-crosser, but I had to check up on him in a hurry. I sat down and did two hours' worth of thinking in ten minutes. Then I jumped into my studs and Tux and went and knocked on Lannin's door. I pretended to be as friendly as a wet setter. 'Listen, Harry,' I said. 'I'm taking you to a party tonight—something damp and lively. A couple of show girls I know are inviting the gang to their apartment, and we won't go home till morning, if then. So climb into your boiled shirt. I'll wait here while you dress. No great rush. You'll have plenty of time to bathe and shave.'

"I figured he'd do what he did do, which was to leave his clothes in the room with me while he was in the bathroom. I gave his coat a quick frisk. Sure enough, sewed inside one of the pockets was his private detective license, made out to Jason Vogel. Also I found a little black notebook in which he had written down all the dope I had been simple enough to spill—and a few other facts I hadn't told him but he had found out by rummaging through my rooms while I was out. I'm businesslike, you see, and I'd kept a record of my operations, with names, places, dates, everything. Also he'd spotted a couple of diamond-and-ruby brooches I had salted away in a cache in my room, against a rainy day.

"He had me and had me right. It was more evidence than I cared to buck. I felt sure I could beat the charge, but it would cost me important money to do it."

"What did you do?" Repton asked.

"I put back the little black notebook," said Shreve, "turned on the radio, and sat there, thinking fast, till Vogel came out of his tub. Then I waited till he was all dressed for the party. Then I shot him square through the heart with a .32 automatic, with a silencer on it, that I'd kept in my room for seven years, as a protection against burglars."

"Hmmn!" exclaimed Repton. "That was a crazy thing to do."

"Was it?" said Shreve. "Listen. Do you think I hadn't a plan all worked out? First I made sure he was dead. Then I got hold of the little black notebook and burned it to ashes in the fireplace and scattered the ashes out of the window. Then I unscrewed the silencer from the gun and slipped the silencer into my pocket. I put the gun in his right hand. Yes, I made sure he was right-handed. Then I went out, letting the door lock itself behind me. But before I went I opened his bathroom window about six inches."

"What for?"

"I'm coming to that. I told you I always worked things out in advance—and this was one job that had to be perfect. No mistakes. I walked out of the building. I was absolutely calm and clear-headed. I went to a store on Broadway and bought something and then came back to my house and dropped in on the manager, whom I knew, a decent old Scotsman who thought I was a Wall Street man. I chatted with him a bit and then asked him how he'd like to play a little bridge in my place that evening. I knew he was a bug about the game. He jumped at the chance and said he'd get two other players.

"In that building lived two doctors, the Andersons, father and son, well-known eye specialists, and Black, the manager brought them along to my apartment, and we played bridge for half an hour or so. Then, while I was dummy, I stepped into my bathroom and took from my pocket the firecracker I had bought, lit its long fuse, and tossed it through Vogel's bathroom window, which was across a narrow areaway, not four feet from mine.

"I was back at the table, dealing the cards, when the cracker exploded. We all jumped when we heard it. 'Sounds like a shot next door,' one of the Andersons said. 'We'd better investigate,' Black said.

"So Black and the rest of us went to Vogel's apartment and pounded on the door, and, getting no answer, Black opened it with his master key. There lay the detective, still warm, and the smell of powder from the cracker filled the room. Naturally, the doctors and Black bent over the dead man, so no attention was paid to what I did, which was to slip into the bathroom, grab up what was left of the cracker and stuff it into my pocket. When I came back the Andersons were solemnly pronouncing it a case of suicide. I had three very substantial citizens who could swear that when the shot was fired I was innocently playing bridge with them at a quarter of a cent a point—"

"Neat!" ejaculated Repton. "Damn neat!"

"It wasn't bad for a beginner, I thought," said Shreve.

"Lord," said Repton. "It's 'way after midnight. I wish I could get to sleep. But I can't."

"Well, you've got a story," Shreve suggested. "You might as well come across with it. I did, you know."

Repton stared at the floor for a while in brooding silence.

"Yes, I've got a story," he said. "Why shouldn't I tell it? It's better than sitting here—doing nothing.

"That's true," said Shreve. "Here's the bottle. Well?"

"I had to eliminate a man, too," Repton said. "I had no more compunction about doing it than I would have about crushing a tarantula. I hated him. I think he was born into the world for no other reason than to devil me. We started out by being partners, Andrew Erskine and I. Not that I ever really liked him. But he was as clever as sin. I trusted him about half an inch, but I woke up one day to find that even that was too much. We'd been promoting a little company together, with the general idea of skimming the cream and leaving the stockholders with nothing but some thin blue water.

"In the middle of it, I had to go to Albany on some other business, and when I got back home I found that Erskine had played me as filthy a trick as ever one white man played on another. He'd walked off with the spoils and left me holding the bag, and the worst part of it was that I couldn't do a thing about it. He was a smooth worker. He fixed it so he came out of it with cash and credit, and I was left with a black eye and empty pockets.

"I swore I'd get Erskine some day. I tried. But he kept getting richer and fatter and smugger, and every time I had a tilt with him he sneaked over a

punch below the belt and left me flat on the mat. While we're being confidential, I might as well admit that I was afraid of Erskine, which, after all, is the chief reason why anybody hates anybody. Anyhow, I hated Andrew Erskine and felt I had good and sufficient reason for hating him. But everyone in Blansford knew we were bitter enemies. So it was a sure thing that if anything violent happened to Erskine, fingers would point straight at me. All I could do was to let my hate fester inside me.

"I did pretty well at that—in spite of Erskine. I made big money—and spent it fast. What I was after was one big killing that would put me on Easy Street the rest of my days. At last my big chance came. Or, rather, I made it come. No need to go into details. It was my own idea and a sound one. Not exactly ethical, maybe, by the strictest standards—but within the law. It was an elaborate water-power operation—and I worked on it a good six years. I put every dime I could lay my hand on into it.

"Then I found out something that almost cracked my spine. One man held the key to my door, and he could block me. Of course it was Andrew Erskine. He stood squarely in my path and there was no way round him. I could see only one solution. Erskine had to go. The question was: How? My enmity for him was well known. I could take no chances. I couldn't picture myself enjoying my money much if I had to spend most of it to keep out of jail. So I sat down and considered the question—and I found an answer."

"What?" questioned Shreve.

"What does a good executive do," Repton asked, "when a job must be done for which he hasn't the technical training? Why, he hires an expert, of course. That's what I did."

Shreve grinned.

"Sensible idea, but how did you find one?" he said.

"It took some hunting," Repton said. "I went to Chicago, where I didn't know a soul, and hung around the underworld dives and kept my eyes and ears open, and pretty soon in a speakeasy I spotted a man who was in the business. He was a soft-spoken, well-dressed chap with a pinched white face—a dope, I guess. Ike Mance was his name. I made a date to meet him that night. I rented a car and drove it myself out Oak Park way and picked Ike up at a street corner where I'd told him to wait.

"We drove into the country and parked in a lonely lane, and had a talk. He was as businesslike as if he'd been selling me a ton of coal. My proposition didn't surprise him one bit. We dickered about the price, and he finally agreed to do it for twenty-five hundred down, in cash, and twenty-five hundred when the job was done. He agreed to start east on the midnight train. I went to French Lick Springs and played some golf with a party of Albany business men I knew, who were staying there. When Andrew Erskine died suddenly I intended to have plenty of unimpeachable witnesses who could swear that I was hundreds of miles away from the scene of the sad event.

Four days after I parted from Mance I read in a New York newspaper a headline I'd been looking for—'DEATH

OF UP-STATE CAPITALIST.' The police, the story said, were somewhat mystified by the death of Andrew Erskine. He had been found in his roadster, which had hit a tree and had been smashed up some but hardly enough to account for the injuries which had caused his death. They called it a queer accident, those brainy cops did, and let it go at that. Mance was a capable workman, all right. Two days later I went to Chicago to meet him and pay him off—"

"You took a chance there, Repton," Shreve said. "A lad like that wouldn't stick at blackmail. While he lived, he had a hold on you—"

"Well, I had a hold on him, remember," said Repton. "Besides, Mance didn't live very long—"

Shreve whistled.

"You are a thoroughgoing son of a gun," he said.

"It was part of my plan from the first," said Repton. "Mance might never have let a peep out of him about my hiring him, and then again he might. You never can tell what a hop-head may do. Mance had to go out of the picture, so he went. I met him in a deserted spot outside of Chicago, took him for a ride in the country in my rented car, and left him in a ditch. I figured I had left no loose threads.

"I had a perfect alibi as far as Erskine was concerned, and there was no way of connecting me and Mance. Nobody had ever seen us together. His death wouldn't cause much of a flurry. What with all the gang wars out that way, the police expect a fellow like Ike Mance to be bumped off, and they don't greatly concern themselves when he is. The whole thing went through without any flaw or slip-up, so far as I could see. I drove the car back to the garage where I'd hired it—assumed name, of course—and took the express east for Blansford."

"I don't see any holes in it," said Shreve. "Not a hole. I thought I was pretty clever—but that beats me. Have another drink?"

"Yes, I need one," said Repton. "Pass back the bottle. Hey, be careful. Lord you've done it now! Smashed to pieces!"

His voice suddenly became desperate. "What are we going to do now, Shreve?" he said. "What are we going to do now?"

"Aw, pull yourself together Repton," said Shreve. "It won't be long. I just heard a cock crow. They come for us at daybreak."

"Will it hurt?" Repton asked hoarsely. "Do you think it will hurt much, Shreve?"

"Not much," said Shreve. "Just one shock, and it's all over."

Down the stone corridor there was a muffled shuffling of feet.

"Listen," Repton cried, his voice raw with terror. "They're coming."

"Let them come," grated Shreve. "Let them come. I'm ready."

Love and Police

THE day that the Marquis de Clameran perceived that Raoul de Lagors was the only obstacle between him and Madeleine, he swore that the obstacle should be removed. He at once took steps for the accomplishment of his purpose. As Raoul was walking home at Vesinet about midnight, he was assailed at a lonely spot not far from the station by three men, who, determined, so they said, to see the time by his watch, fell upon him suddenly, and but for Raoul's wonderful strength and agility, would have left him dead on the spot. As it was, he soon, by his skilfully plied blows, for he was proficient in fencing, and had learned boxing in England, made his enemies take to their heels. He quietly continued his walk home, fully determined in future to be well armed when he went out at night. He never for an instant suspected his accomplice of having instigated the assault. But two days afterward while sitting in a cafe he frequented, a burly, vulgar-looking man, a stranger to him, tried to draw him into a quarrel about nothing and finally threw a card in his face, saying he was ready to grant him satisfaction when and where he pleased. Raoul rushed toward the man to chastise him on the spot; but his friends held him back.

"Very well, then," said he; "be at home to-morrow morning, sir, and I will send two of my friends to you." As soon as the stranger had left, Raoul recovered from his excitement and began to wonder what could have been the motive for this evidently premeditated insult. Picking up the card of the bully, he read:

W. H. B. JACOBSON.
Formerly Garibaldian volunteer.
Ex-staff-officer of the armies of the South.
(Italy, America).
30, *Rue Leonie.*

"Oh! oh!" thought Raoul, "this glorious soldier may very possibly have won his laurels in a fencing school!"

Still the insult had been offered in the presence of others; and no matter who the offender was, it must be noticed. Raoul requested two of his friends to call upon M. Jacobson early the next morning, and make arrangements for the duel. It was settled that they should render him an account of their mission at the Hotel du Louvre, where he arranged to sleep. Everything being arranged, Raoul went out to find out something about M. Jacobson. He was an expert at the business, but he had considerable trouble. The information he obtained was not very promising. M. Jacobson, who lived in a very suspicious-looking little hotel, frequented chiefly by women of loose character, was described to him as an eccentric gentleman whose means of livelihood was a problem difficult to solve. He reigned despotically at a cheap restaurant near by, went out a

great deal, came home very late, and seemed to have no capital to live upon save his military titles, his talent for entertaining, and a notable quantity of various expedients.

"That being his character," thought Raoul, "I can not see what object he can have in picking a quarrel with me. What good will it do him to run a sword through my body? Not the slightest; and moreover, his pugnacious conduct is apt to attract the attention of the police, who, from what I hear, are the last people this warrior would like to have after him. Therefore, for acting as he has done, he must have some reasons which I am unable to discern."

The result of his meditations was, that Raoul, upon his return to the Hotel du Louvre, did not mention a word of his adventure to De Clameran, whom he still found up. At half-past eight his seconds arrived. M. Jacobson had agreed to fight, and had chosen the sword; but it must be that very hour, in the Bois de Vincennes. Raoul felt very uneasy, nevertheless he boldly said: "I accept the gentleman's conditions." They went to the place decided upon, and after an interchange of a few thrusts Raoul was slightly wounded in the right shoulder. The "Ex-staff-officer of the armies of the South" wished to continue the combat, but Raoul's seconds—brave young men—declared that honor was satisfied, and that they had no intention of subjecting their friend's life to unnecessary hazards. The ex-officer was forced to submit, and unwillingly retired from the field. Raoul went home delighted at having escaped with nothing more serious than a little loss of blood, and resolved to keep clear of all so-called Garibaldians in the future. In fact, a night's reflection had convinced him that De Clameran was the instigator of the two attempts on his life. Madame Fauvel having told him what conditions Madeleine placed on her consent to marry, Raoul instantly saw how necessary his removal would be, now that he was an impediment in the way of De Clameran's success. He recalled a thousand insignificant events of the last few days, and, on skilfully questioning the marquis, had his suspicions changed into certainty. This conviction that the man whom he had so materially assisted in his criminal plans, had hired assassins to make away with him, made him mad with rage. This treason seemed to him monstrous. He was as yet not sufficiently experienced in ruffianism to know that one villian always sacrifices another to advance his own projects; he was credulous enough to believe in the old adage of "honor among thieves." His rage was naturally mingled with fright, well knowing that his life hung by a thread, when it was threatened by a daring scoundrel like De Clameran. Knowing his accomplice's nature, Raoul saw himself surrounded by snares; he saw death before him in every form; he was equally afraid of going out, and of remaining at home. He only ventured with the most suspicious caution into the most public places; he feared poison as much as the assassin's knife, and imagined that every dish placed before him tasted of strychnine. This life of torture was intolerable, so with a desire for revenge as much as with a view of securing his

personal safety, he determined to anticipate a struggle which he felt must terminate in the death of either De Clameran or himself. "Better kill the devil," said he, "than be killed by him." In his days of poverty, Raoul had often risked his liberty to obtain a few guineas, and would not have hesitated to make short work of a person like De Clameran. But with money prudence had come. He wished to enjoy his four hundred thousand francs without being compromised by committing a murder which might be discovered; he therefore began to devise some other means of getting rid of his dreaded accomplice. In the mean time, he thought it would be a good thing to thwart De Clameran's marriage with Madeleine. He was sure that he would thus strike him to the heart, and this was at least a satisfaction. Raoul was persuaded that, by openly siding with Madeleine and her aunt, he could save them from De Clameran's clutches. Having fully resolved upon this course, he wrote a note to Madame Fauvel asking for an interview. The poor woman hastened to Visnet convinced that some new misfortune was in store for her. Her alarm was groundless. She found Raoul more tender and affectionate than he had ever been. He saw the necessity of reassuring her, and winning his old place in her forgiving heart, before making his disclosures. He succeeded. The poor lady had a smiling and happy look as she sat in an armchair, with Raoul kneeling beside her.

"I have distressed you too long, my dear mother," he said in his softest tones; "but I repent sincerely; now listen to me."

He had not time to say more; the door was violently thrown open, and Raoul, springing to his feet, was confronted by M. Fauvel. The banker had a revolver in his hand, and was ghastly pale. It was evident that he was making superhuman efforts to remain calm, like a judge whose duty it is to justly punish crime.

"Ah," he exclaimed with a horrible laugh, "you look surprised. You did not expect me? You thought that my imbecile credulity assured you an eternal immunity!" Raoul had the courage to place himself before Madame Fauvel, and to stand prepared to receive the expected bullet. "I assure you, uncle," he began. "Enough!" interrupted the banker with an angry gesture, "let me hear no more infamous falsehoods! End this odious comedy, of which I am no longer the dupe."

"I swear to you—"

"Spare yourself the trouble of denying anything. Do you not see that I know all? I know who pawned my wife's diamonds. I know who committed the robbery for which an innocent man was arrested and imprisoned!"

Madame Fauvel, white with terror, fell upon her knees. At last it had come—the dreadful day had come. Vainly had she added falsehood to falsehood; vainly had she sacrificed herself and others; all was discovered. She saw that she was lost, and wringing her hands, with her face bathed in tears, she moaned: "Pardon, Andre! I beg you, forgive me!"

At these heart-broken tones, the banker shook like a leaf. This voice brought before him the twenty years of happiness which he had owed to this woman who had always been the mis-

tress of his heart, whose slightest wish had been his law, and who, by a smile or a frown, could make him the happiest or the most miserable of men. Could this wretched woman crouching at his feet be his beloved Valentine, the pure, innocent girl whom he had found secluded in the chateau of La Verberie? Could this be the cherished wife whom he had worshiped for so many years? In the memory of his lost happiness never to return he seemed to forget the present, and was almost melted to forgiveness. "Unhappy woman," he murmured, "unhappy woman! What had I done that you should thus deceive me? Ah, my only fault was loving you too deeply, and letting you see it. One wearies of everything in this world, even happiness. Did pure domestic joys pall upon you and weary you, driving you to seek the excitement of sinful passion? Were you so tired of the atmosphere of respect and affection which surrounded you that you must needs risk your honor and mine by braving public opinion? Oh, into what an abyss you have fallen, Valentine! If you were wearied by my constant devotion, had the thought of your children no power to restrain your evil passions?"

M. Fauvel spoke slowly, with painful effort, as if each word choked him. Raoul, who listened with attention, saw that if the banker knew some things, he certainly did not know all. He saw that erroneous information had misled the unhappy man, and that he was a victim of false appearances. He determined to convince him of the mistake under which he was laboring. "Sir," he began, "will you consent to listen—"

But the sound of Raoul's voice was sufficient to break the charm. "Silence!" cried the banker with an angry oath; "silence!" For some moments nothing was heard but the sobs of Madame Fauvel.

"I came here," continued the banker, "with the intention of surprising and killing you both. I have surprised you, but—my courage, yes, my courage fails me—I can not kill an unarmed man." Raoul once more tried to speak. "Let me finish!" interrupted M. Fauvel. "Your life is in my hands; the law excuses the vengeance of an outraged husband, but I refuse to take advantage of it. I see on your mantlepiece a revolver similar to mine; take it, and defend yourself."

"Never!"—"Defend yourself!" cried the banker, raising his weapon; "if you do not—"

Seeing the barrel of M. Fauvel's revolver close to his breast, Raoul, in self-defense, seized his own and prepared to fire. "Stand in that corner of the room, and I will stand in this," continued the banker; "and when the clock strikes, which will be in a few seconds, we will both fire together."

They took the places designated, and stood perfectly still. But the horror of the scene was too much for Madame Fauvel to witness it any longer without interposing. She understood but one thing: her son and her husband were about to kill each other before her eyes. Fright and horror gave her strength to rise and rush between the two men.

"For God's sake, have mercy, Andre!" she cried, turning to her husband and wringing her hands with anguish; "let me tell you everything; don't kill him."

M. Fauvel mistook this burst of maternal love for the pleadings of a guilty wife defending her lover. He roughly seized his wife by the arm and thrust her aside: "Get out of the way!" he cried. But she would not be repulsed; rushing up to Raoul, she threw her arms around him, and said to her husband: "Kill me, and me alone; for I alone am guilty."

At these words M. Fauvel's rage knew no bounds; he deliberately took aim at the guilty pair and fired. As neither Raoul nor Madame Fauvel fell, the banker fired a second time; then a third. He was preparing for a fourth shot when a man rushed into the room, snatched the revolver from the banker's hand, and, throwing him on the sofa, ran toward Madame Fauvel. This man was M. Verduret, who had been warned by Cavaillon, but who did not know that Nina had withdrawn the charges from M. Fauvel's weapon. "'Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed, "she is unhurt."

But the banker had already regained his feet. "Leave me alone," he cried, struggling to get free; "I will have vengeance!" M. Verduret siezed his wrists in a viselike grasp, and in a solemn tone, so as to give more weight to his words, he said, "Thank God you are saved from committing a terrible crime; the anonymous letter deceived you."

M. Fauvel never once thought of asking this stranger who he was and where he came from. He heard and understood but one fact: the anonymous letter had lied. "But my wife confesses her guilt," he stammered. "Yes," replied M. Verduret, "but not of the crime you imagine. Do you know who that man is that you wish to kill?"

"Her lover!"

"No: her son!"

The presence of this well-informed stranger seemed to confound Raoul and to frighten him more than M. Fauvel's threats had done. Yet he had sufficient presence of mind to say: "It is the truth!"

The banker looked wildly from Raoul to M. Verduret; then, fastening his haggard eyes on his wife, exclaimed: "What you tell me is not possible! Give me proofs!"—"You shall have proofs," replied M. Verduret; "but first listen."

And rapidly he related the principal events of the drama he had discovered. The true state of the case was terribly distressing to M. Fauvel, but nothing compared with what he had suspected. His throbbing, yearning heart told him that he still loved his wife. Why should he punish a fault committed so very long ago, and atoned for by twenty years of devotion and suffering? For some moments after M. Verduret had finished his explanation, M. Fauvel remained silent. So many strange events had happened, following each other in such quick succession, and culminating in the shocking scene which had just taken place, that M. Fauvel seemed to be too bewildered to think clearly. If his heart counseled pardon and forgetfulness, wounded pride and self-respect demanded vengeance. If Raoul, the baleful witness, the living proof of a far-off sin, were not in existence, M. Fauvel would not have hesitated. Gaston de Clameran was dead; he would have held out his arms to his wife, saying: "Come to my heart! your sacrifices for my honor shall be your absolution;

let the sad past be forgotten." But the sight of Raoul froze the words upon his lips.

"So this is your son," said he to his wife, "this man, who has plundered you and robbed me!" Madame Fauvel was unable to utter a word in reply to these reproachful words. "Oh!" said M. Verduret, "madame will tell you that this young man is the son of Gaston de Clameran; she has never doubted it. But, the truth is—"

"What!"

"That, in order to swindle her more easily, he has perpetrated a gross imposture."

During the last few minutes Raoul had been quietly creeping toward the door, hoping to escape while no one was thinking of him. But M. Verduret was watching him out of the corner of his eye, and stopped him just as he was about leaving the room. "Not so fast, my pretty youth," he said, dragging him into the middle of the apartment; "it is not polite to leave us so unceremoniously. Let us have a little explanation before parting!"

M. Verduret's jeering words and mocking manner were a revelation for Raoul. "The merry-andrew!" he gasped, starting back with an affrighted look.

"The same, my friend," said the stout man. "Ah, now that you recognize me, I confess that the merry-andrew and myself are one and the same; here is proof of it." And turning up his sleeve he showed his bare arm. "I imagine you know the villian that gave me this little decoration that night I was walking along the Rue Bourdaloue. That being the case, you know I have a slight claim upon you, and shall expect you to relate to us your little story." But Raoul was so terrified that he could not utter a word. "Your modesty prevents your speaking," said M. Verduret. "Bravo! modesty belongs to talent, and for one of your age you certainly have displayed a talent for knavery."

M. Fauvel listened without understanding a word of what was said. "Into what abyss of shame have we fallen!" he groaned.—"Reassure yourself, sir," replied M. Verduret in a serious tone. "After what I have been constrained to tell you, what remains to be said is a mere trifle. This is the end of the story. On leaving Mihonne, who had given him a full account of the misfortunes of Mademoiselle Valentine de la Verberie, De Clameran hastened to London. He had no difficulty in finding the farmer's wife to whom the old comtesse had intrusted Gaston's son. But here an unexpected disappointment greeted him. He learned that the child, who was registered on the parish books as Raoul Valentin Wilson, had died of the croup when eighteen months old."

Raoul tried to protest. "Did any one dare say that?" he commenced.

"It was not only stated, but proved, my pretty youth," replied M. Verduret. "You don't suppose I am a man to trust to mere gossip; do you?" He drew from his pocket several stamped documents, and laid them on the table. "These are the declarations of the nurse, her husband, and four witnesses. Here is an extract from the registry of births; this is the certificate of registry of death; and all these are authenticated at the French Embassy. Now, are you satisfied, young man?"

"What next?" inquired M. Fauvel.—"De Clameran," replied M. Verduret,

"finding that the child was dead, supposed that he could, in spite of this disappointment, obtain money from Madame Fauvel; he was mistaken. His first attempt failed. Having an inventive turn of mind, he determined that the child should come to life again. Among his large circle of rascally acquaintance, he selected the young fellow who stands before you."

Madame Fauvel was in a pitiable state. And yet she began to feel a ray of hope; her acute anxiety had so long tortured her that the truth was a relief. "Can this be possible?" she murmured, "can it be?"—"What!" cried the banker; "can an infamous plot like this be planned in the present day?"

"All this is false!" said Raoul boldly.

M. Verduret turned to Raoul and, bowing with ironical respect, said: "You desire proofs, sir, do you? You shall certainly have convincing ones. I have just left a friend of mine, M. Palot, who brought me valuable information from London. Now, my young gentleman, I will tell you the little story he told me, and then you can give your opinion of it. In 1847 Lord Murray, a wealthy and generous nobleman, had a jockey named Spencer, of whom he was very fond. At the Epsom races this jockey was thrown from his horse and killed. Lord Murray grieved over the loss of his favorite, and, having no children of his own, declared his intention of adopting Spencer's son, who was then but four years old. Thus James Spencer was brought up in affluence, as heir to the immense wealth of the noble lord. He was a handsome, intelligent boy, and gave satisfaction to his protector until he was sixteen years of age, when he became intimate with a worthless set of people, and went to the bad. Lord Murray, who was very indulgent, pardoned many grave faults; but one fine morning discovered that his adopted son had been imitating his signature upon some checks. He indignantly dismissed him from his house, and told him never to show his face there again. James Spencer had been living in London about four years, managing to support himself by gambling and swindling, when he met De Clameran, who offered him twenty-five thousand francs to play a part in a little comedy which he had himself arranged."

"You are a detective!" interrupted Raoul, not caring to hear any more. The stout man smiled blandly.

"At present," he replied, "I am merely Prosper Bertomy's friend. It depends entirely upon yourself as to which character I shall hereafter appear in."

"What do you require me to do?"

"Where are the three hundred and fifty thousand francs which you have stolen?"

The young rascal hesitated a moment and then said: "The money is here."

"Very good. This frankness will be of service to you. I know that the money is in this room, and also that it is at the bottom of that cupboard. Do you intend to refund it?" Raoul saw that his game was lost. He tremblingly went to the cupboard and pulled out several rolls of bank-notes, and an enormous package of pawnbroker's tickets.

"Very well done," said M. Verduret as he carefully examined the money and papers: "this is the most sensible step

you ever took." Raoul relied on this moment, when everybody's attention would be absorbed by the money, to make his escape. He crept toward the door, gently opened it, slipped out, and locked it, for the key was on the outside.

"He has escaped!" cried M. Fauvel.

"Of course," replied M. Verduret without even looking up: "I thought he would have sense enough to do that."

"But is he to go unpunished?"

"My dear sir, would you have this affair become a public scandal? Do you wish your wife's name to be brought into a case of this nature at the police court?"

"Never!"

"Then the best thing you can do is to let the rascal go. Here are receipts for all the articles which he has pawned, so that we should consider ourselves fortunate. He has kept fifty thousand francs, but that is all the better for you. That sum will enable him to leave France, and we shall never see him again."

Like every one else, M. Fauvel yielded to M. Verduret's ascendency. Gradually he had awakened to the true state of affairs; prospective happiness no longer seemed impossible, and he felt that he was indebted to the man before him for more than life. With earnest gratitude he seized M. Verduret's hand as if to carry it to his lips, and said in broken tones: "How can I ever find words to express how deeply I appreciate your kindness? How can I ever repay the great service you have rendered me?" M. Verduret reflected a moment, and then replied: "If you concider yourself under any obligations to me, sir, I have a favor to ask of you."

"A favor! Speak, sir, you have but to name it."

"I will not hesitate, then, to explain myself. I am Prosper's friend. You can restore him to his former honorable position. You can do so much for him, sir! he loves Mademoiselle Madeleine—"

"Madeliene shall be his wife, sir," interrupted the banker; "I give you my word. And I will so publicly exonerate him that not a shadow of suspicion will ever rest upon his name."

The stout man quietly took up his hat and cane, as if he had been paying an ordinary call. "You will excuse my importuning you," said he, "but Madame Fauvel—"

"Andre!" murmured the wretched woman. "Andre!"

The banker hesitated a moment, then, following the impulse of his heart, ran to his wife, and, clasping her in his arms, said tenderly: "No, I will not be foolish enough to struggle against my heart. I do not pardon, Valentine, I forget; I forget all!"

M. Verduret had nothing more to do at Vesinet. Without taking leave of the banker, he unlocked the door, quietly left the room, and, jumping into his cab, ordered the driver to return to Paris and drive to the Hotel du Louvre. His mind was filled with anxiety. He knew that Raoul would give him no more trouble; the young rogue was probably far off by that time. But De Clameran should not escape unpunished; and how this punishment could be brought about without compromising Madame Fauvel was the problem to be solved. M. Verduret thought over vari-

ous expedients, but not one could be applied to the present circumstances. After long thought he decided that an accusation of poisoning must be made at Oloron. He would go there and work upon "public pinion," so that, to satisfy the townspeople, the authorities would order a post-mortem examination of Gaston's body. But this mode of proceeding required time; and De Clameran would certainly escape before long. He was bemoaning his inability to come to a satisfactory decision, when the cab stopped in front of the Hotel du Louvre. It was almost dark. A crowd of people was collected round about the entrance, eagerly discussing some exciting event which seemed to have just taken place.

"What has happened?" asked M. Verduret of one of the crowd.—"The strangest thing you have ever heard of," replied the man; "yes, I saw it with my own eyes. He first appeared at that seventh-story window; he was only half-dressed. Some men tried to seize him; but, bah! with the agility of a squirrel, he jumped out upon the roof, shrieking: 'Murder! murder!' The recklessness of his conduct led me to suppose—" The gossip stopped short in his narrative, very much surprised and vexed; his questioner had vanished.

"If it should be De Clameran!" thought M. Verduret; "if terror has deranged that brain, so capable of working out great crimes!"

While thus talking to himself, he elbowed his way into the courtyard of the hotel. At the foot of the principal staircase he found M. Fanferlot and three peculiar looking individuals waiting together. "Well!" cried M. Verduret, "what is the matter?" With laudable precision the four men stood at attention. "The chief!" said they.—"Come!" said the stout man with an oath. "What has happened?"—"This is what has happened, sir," said Fanferlot dejectedly. "I am doomed to ill luck. You see how it is; this is the only chance I ever had of working out a beautiful case, and puff! my criminal goes and sells me."

"Then it is De Clameran who—"

"Of course it is. When the rascal saw me this morning he scampered off like a hare. You should have seen him run; I thought he would never stop this side of Ivry: but not at all. On reaching the Boulevard des Ecoles, a sudden idea seemed to strike him, and he made a bee-line for his hotel; I suppose to secure his pile of money. Directly he gets here, what does he see? These three friends of mine. The sight of these gentlemen had the effect of a sunstroke upon him; he went raving mad on the spot."

"Where is he now?"

"At the Prefecture, I suppose. Some policemen handcuffed him and drove off with him in a cab."

"Come with me."

M. Verduret and Fanferlot found De Clameran in one of the private cells reserved for dangerous prisoners. He had on a strait-waistcoat and was struggling violently against three men who were striving to hold him, while a physician tried to force him to swallow a potion. "Help!" he shrieked, "help, for God's sake! Do you not see my brother coming after me? Look! he wants to poison me!" M. Verduret took the physician aside, and asked him a few

questions. "The wretched man is in a hopeless state," replied the doctor; "this species of insanity is incurable. He thinks some one is trying to poison him, and nothing will persuade him to eat or drink anything; he will die of starvation, after having suffered all the tortures of poison."

M. Verduret shuddered as he left the Prefecture. "Madame Fauvel is saved," he murmured, "since God has himself punished De Clameran!"

"That doesn't help me in the least," grumbled Fanferlot. "The idea of all my trouble and labor ending in this way!"

"True," replied M. Verduret, "the File Number 113 will never leave its portfolio. But console yourself; before the end of the month I will give you a letter to a friend of mine, and what you have lost in fame you will gain in gold."

One morning some days later, M. Lecoq—the official Lecoq, who resembles the head of a department—was walking up and down his private office, looking at the clock at every moment. At last, a bell rang, and the faithful Janouille ushered in Madame Nina and Prosper Bertomy. "Ah," said M. Lecoq, "you are punctual, my fond lovers; that is well."

"We are not lovers, sir," replied Madame Gipsy. "Only M. Verduret's express orders have brought us together here to meet him."—"Very well," said the celebrated detective; "then be good enough to wait a few minutes: I will tell him you are here."

During the quarter of an hour that Nina and Prosper remained alone together, they did not exchange a word. Finally a door opened, and M. Verduret appeared.

Nina and Prosper eagerly started toward him; but he checked them by one of those looks which no one ever dared resist. "You have come," he said severely, "to hear the secret of my conduct. I have promised, and will keep my word, however painful it may be to my feelings. Listen, then. My best friend is a loyal, honest fellow, named Caldas. Eighteen months ago this friend was the happiest of men. Infatuated by a woman, he lived for her alone, and, fool that he was, imagined that as she owed all to him, she loved him."

"Yes!" cried Nina, "yes, she loved him!"

"So be it. She loved him so much that one fine night she went off with another man. In his first moments of despair, Caldas wished to kill himself. Then he reflected that it would be wiser to live, and revenge himself."

"But then—" faltered Prosper.

"Then Caldas avenged himself in his own way. He made the woman who deceived him recognize his immense superiority over his rival. Weak, timid, and without intelligence, the latter was disgraced and falling into the abyss, when Caldas's powerful hand saved him. For you have understood, have you not? The woman is Nina; the seducer is yourself and Caldas is—"

With a quick, dexterous movement he threw off his wig and whiskers, and stood before them the real, intelligent and proud Lecoq.

"Caldas!" cried Nina.

"No, not Caldas, nor Verduret either, but Lecoq, the detective!"

There was a moment of astonished

silence, then M. Lecoq turned to Prosper and said: "It is not to me alone that you owe your salvation. A noble girl in confiding in me rendered my task easy. I mean Mademoiselle Madeleine; I promised her that M. Fauvel should never know anything. Your letter made it impossible for me to keep my promise. That is all."

He turned to leave the room, but Nina stopped him. "Caldas," she murmured, "I implore you to have pity on me. I am *so* miserable. Ah, if you only knew! Be forgiving to one who has always loved you, Caldas! Listen—

* * * * * *

Prosper departed from M. Lecoq's office alone.

On the 15th of last month was celebrated, at the church of Notre Dame de Lorette, the marriage of M. Prosper Bertomy and Mademoiselle Madeleine Fauvel.

The banking-house is still in the Rue de Provence; but as M. Fauvel has determined to retire from business, and live in the country, the name of the firm has been changed, and is now: "Prosper Bertomy & Co."

A Case of Identity

"My dear fellow," said Sherlock Holmes, as we sat on either side of the fire in his lodgings at Baker Street, "life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent. We would not dare to conceive the things which are really mere commonplaces of existence. If we could fly out of that window hand in hand, hover over this great city, gently remove the roofs, and peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chain of events, working through generations, and leading to the most *outré* results, it would make all fiction, with its conventionalities and foreseen conclusions, most stale and unprofitable."

"And yet I am not convinced of it," I answered.

"The cases which come to light in the papers are, as a rule, bald enough, and vulgar enough. We have in our police records realism pushed to its extreme limits, and yet the result, it must be confessed, neither fascinating nor artistic."

"A certain selection and discretion must be used in producing a realistic effect," remarked Holmes. "This is wanting in the police report, where more stress is laid upon the platitudes of the magistrate than upon the details, which to an observer contain the vital essence of the whole matter. Depend upon it, there is nothing so unnatural as the commonplace."

I smiled and shook my head. "I can quite understand your thinking so," I said. "Of course, in your position of unofficial adviser and helper to everybody who is absolutely puzzled, throughout three continents, you are brought in contact with all that is strange and *bizarre*. But here"—I picked up the morning paper from the ground—"let us put it to a practical test. Here is the first heading upon which I come. 'A husband's cruelty to his wife.' There is half a column of print, but I know without reading it that it is all perfectly familiar to me. There is, of course, the other woman, the drink, the push, the blow, the bruise, the unsympathetic sister or landlady. The crudest of writers could invent nothing more crude."

"Indeed your example is an unfortunate one for your argument" said Holmes, taking the paper, and glancing his eye down it. "This is the Dundas separation case, and, as it happens, I was engaged in clearing up some small points in connection with it. The husband was a teetotaler, there was no other woman, and the conduct complained of was that he had drifted into the habit of winding up every meal by taking out his false teeth and hurling them at his wife, which you will allow is not an action likely to occur to the imagination of the average story-teller. Take a pinch of snuff, doctor, and acknowledge that I have scored over you in your example."

He held out his snuff-box of old gold, with a great amethyst in the center of the lid. Its splendor was in such contrast to his homely ways and simple life that I could not help commenting upon it.

"Ah!" said he, "I forgot that I had not seen you for some weeks. It is a little souvenir from the King of Bohemia, in return for my assistance in the case of the Irene Adler papers."

"And the ring?" I asked, glancing at a remarkable brilliant which sparkled upon his finger.

"It was from the reigning family of Holland, though the matter in which I served them was of such delicacy that I cannot confide it even to you, who have been good enough to chronicle one or two of my little problems."

"And have you any on hand just now?" I asked with interest.

"Some ten or twelve, but none which present any features of interest. They are important, you understand, without being interesting. Indeed I have found that it is usually in unimportant matters that there is a field for the observation, and for the quick analysis of cause and effect which gives the charm to an investigation. The larger crimes are apt to be the simpler, for the bigger the crime, the more obvious, as a rule, is the motive. In these cases, save for one rather intricate matter which has been referred to me from Marseilles, there is nothing which presents any features of interest. It is possible, however, that I may have something better before many minutes are over, for this is one of my clients, or I am much mistaken."

He had risen from his chair, and was standing between the parted blinds, gazing down into the dull, neutral-tinted London street. Looking over his shoulder, I saw that on the pavement opposite there stood a large woman with a heavy fur boa round her neck, and a large

curling red feather in a broad-brimmed hat which was tilted in a coquettish Duchess-of-Devonshire fashion over her ear.

From under this great panoply she peeped up in a nervous, hesitating fashion at our windows, while her bdy oscillated backward and forward, and her fingers fidgeted with her glove buttons. Suddenly, with a plunge, as of the swimmer who leaves the bank, she hurried across the road, and we heard the sharp clang of the bell.

"I have seen those symptoms before," said Holmes, throwing his cigarette into the fire. "Oscillation upon the pavement always means an *affaire de cœur*. She would like advice, but is not sure that the matter is not too delicate for communication. And yet even here we may discriminate. When a woman has been seriously wronged by a man, she no longer oscillates, and the usual symptom is a broken bell wire. Here we may take it that there is a love matter, but that the maiden is not so much angry as perplexed or grieved. But here she comes in person to resolve our doubts."

As he spoke, there was a tap at the door, and the boy in buttons entered to announce Miss Mary Sutherland, while the lady herself loomed behind his small black figure like a full-sailed merchantman behind a tiny pilot boat. Sherlock Holmes welcomed her with the easy courtesy for which he was remarkable, and having closed the door, and bowed her into an armchair, he looked her over in the minute, and yet abstracted fashion which was peculiar to him.

"Do you not find," he said, "that with your short sight it is a little trying to do so much typewriting?"

"I did at first," she answered, "but now I know where the letters are without looking." Then, suddenly realizing the full purport of his words, she gave a violent start, and looked up with fear and astonishment upon her broad, good-humored face. "You've heard about me, Mr. Holmes," she cried, "else how could you know all that?"

"Never mind," said Holmes, laughing, "it is my business to know things. Perhaps I have trained myself to see what others overlook. If not, why should you come to consult me?"

"I came to you, sir, because I heard of you from Mrs. Etherege, whose husband you found so easily when the police and every one had given him up for dead. Oh, Mr. Holmes, I wish you would do as much for me. I'm not rich, but still I have a hundred a year in my own right, besides the little that I make by the machine, and I would give it all to know what has become of Mr. Hosmer Angel."

"Why did you come away to consult me in such a hurry?" asked Sherlock Holmes, with his finger-tips together, and his eyes to the ceiling.

Again a startled look came over the somewhat vacuous face of Miss Mary Sutherland. "Yes, I did bang out of the house," she said, "for it made me angry to see the easy way in which Mr. Windibank—that is, my father—took it all. He would not go to the police, and he would not go to you, and so at last, as he would do nothing, and kept on saying that there was no harm done, it made me mad, and I just on with my things and came away to you."

"Your father," said Holmes, "your stepfather, surely, since the name is different."

"Yes, my stepfather. I call him father, though it sounds funny, too, for he is only five years and two months older than myself."

"And your mother is still alive?"

"Oh, yes; mother is alive and well. I wasn't best pleased, Mr. Holmes, when she married again so soon after father's death, and a man who was nearly fifteen years younger than herself. Father was a plumber in the Tottenham Court Road, and he left a tidy business behind him, which mother carried on with Mr. Hardy, the foreman; but when Mr. Windibank came along he made her sell the business, for he was very superior, being a traveler in wines. They got four thousand seven hundred for the good-will and interest, which wasn't near as much as father could have got if he had been alive."

I had expected to see Sherlock Holmes impatient under this rambling and inconsequential narrative, but, on the contrary, he had listened with the greatest concentration of attention.

"Your own little income," he asked, "does it come out of the business?"

"Oh, no, sir. It is quite separate, and was left me by my uncle Ned in Auckland. It is in New Zealand stock, paying four and a half per cent. Two thousand five hundred pounds was the amount, but I can only touch the interest."

"You interest me extremely," said Holmes. "And since you draw so large a sum as a hundred a year, with what you earn into the bargain, you no doubt travel a little, and indulge yourself in every way. I believe that a single lady can get on very nicely upon an income of about sixty pounds."

"I could do with much less than that, Mr. Holmes, but you understand that as long as I live at home I don't wish to be a burden to them, and so they have the use of the money just while I am staying with them. Of course that is only just for the time. Mr. Windibank draws my interest every quarter, and pays it over to mother, and I find that I can do pretty well with what I earn at typewriting. It brings me twopence a sheet, and I can often do from fifteen to twenty sheets in a day."

"You have made your position very clear to me," said Holmes. "This is my friend, Doctor Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Kindly tell us now all about your connection with Mr. Hosmer Angel."

A flush stole over Miss Sutherland's face, and she picked nervously at the fringe of her jacket. "I met him first at the gas-fitters' ball," she said. "They used to send father tickets when he was alive, and then afterward they remembered us, and sent them to mother. Mr. Windibank did not wish us to go. He never did wish us to go anywhere. He would get quite mad if I wanted so much as to join a Sunday-school treat. But this time I was set on going, and I would go, for what right had he to prevent? He said the folk were not fit for us to know, when all father's friends were to be there. And he said that I had nothing fit to wear, when I had my purple plush that I had never so much as taken out of the drawer. At last, when nothing else would do, he

went off to France upon the business of the firm; but we went, mother and I, with Mr. Hardy, who used to be our foreman, and it was there I met Mr. Hosmer Angel."

"I suppose," said Holmes, "that when Mr. Windibank came back from France, he was very annoyed at your having gone to the ball?"

"Oh, well, he was very good about it. He laughed, I remember, and shrugged his shoulders, and said there was no use denying anything to a woman, for she would have her own way."

"I see. Then at the gas-fitters' ball you met, as I understand, a gentleman called Mr. Hosmer Angel?"

"Yes, sir. I met him that night, and he called next day to ask if we had got home all safe, and after that we met him—that is to say, Mr. Holmes, I met him twice for walks, but after that father came back again, and Mr. Hosmer Angel could not come to the house any more."

"No?"

"Well, you know, father didn't like anything of the sort. He wouldn't have any visitors if he could help it, and he used to say that a woman should be happy in her own family circle. But then, as I used to say to mother, a woman wants her own circle to begin with, and I had not got mine yet."

"But how about Mr. Hosmer Angel? Did he make no attempt to see you?"

"Well, father was going off to France again in a week, and Hosmer wrote and said that it would be safer and better not to see each other until he had gone. We could write in the meantime, and he used to write every day. I took the letters in the morning, so there was no need for father to know."

"Were you engaged to the gentleman at this time?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Holmes. We were engaged after the first walk that we took. Hosmer—Mr. Angel—was a cashier in an office in Leadenhall Street—and—"

"What office?"

"That's the worst of it, Mr. Holmes, I don't know."

"Where did he live, then?"

"He slept on the premises."

"And you don't know his address?"

"No—except that it was Leadenhall Street."

"Where did you address your letters, then?"

"To the Leadenhall Street Post-office, to be left till called for. He said that if they were sent to the office he would be chaffed by all the other clerks about having letters from a lady, so I offered to typewrite them, like he did his, but he wouldn't have that, for he said that when I wrote them they seemed to come from me, but when they were typewritten he always felt that the machine had come between us. That will just show you how fond he was of me, Mr. Holmes, and the little things that he would think of."

"It was most suggestive," said Holmes. "It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important. Can you remember any other little things about Mr. Hosmer Angel?"

"He was a very shy man, Mr. Holmes. He would rather walk with me in the evening than in the daylight, for he said that he hated to be conspicuous. Very retiring and gentlemanly he was.

Even his voice was gentle. He'd had the quinsy and swollen glands when he was young, he told me, and it had left him with a weak throat and a hesitating, whispering fashion of speech. He was always well-dressed, very neat and plain, but his eyes were weak, just as mine are, and he wore tinted glasses against the glare."

"Well, and what happend when Mr. Windibank, your stepfather, returned to France?"

"Mr. Hosmer Angel came to the house again, and proposed that we should marry before father came back. He was in dreadful earnest, and made me swear, with my hands on the Testament, that whatever happened I would always be true to him. Mother said he was quite right to make me swear, and that it was a sign of his passion. Mother was all in favor from the first, and was even fonder of him than I was. Then, when they talked of marrying within the week, I began to ask about father; but they both said never to mind about father, but just to tell him afterward, and mother said she would make it all right with him. I didn't quite like that, Mr. Holmes. It seemed funny that I should ask his leave, as he was only a few years older than me; but I didn't want to do anything on the sly, so I wrote to father at Bordeaux, where the company has its French offices, but the letter came back to me on the very morning of the wedding."

"It missed him, then?"

"Yes, sir, for he had started to England just before it arrived."

"Ha! that was unfortunate. Your wedding was arranged, then, for the Friday. Was it to be in church?"

"Yes, sir, but very quietly. It was to be at St. Saviour's, near King's Cross, and we were to have breakfast afterward at the St. Pancras Hotel. Hosmer came for us in a hansom, but as there were two of us, he put us both into it, and stepped himself into a four-wheeler, which happened to be the only other cab in the street. We got to the church first, and when the four-wheeler drove up we waited for him to step out, but he never did, and when the cabman got down from the box and looked, there was no one there! The cabman said that he could not imagine what had become of him, for he had seen him get in with his own eyes. That was last Friday, Mr. Holmes, and I have never seen or heard anything since then to throw any light upon what became of him."

"It seems to me that you have been very shamefully treated," said Holmes.

"Oh, no, sir! He was too good and kind to leave me so. Why, all the morning he was saying to me that, whatever happened, I was to be true; and that even if something quite unforseen occurred to separate us, I was always to remember that I was pledged to him, and that he would claim his pledge sooner or later. It seemed strange talk for a wedding morning, but what has happened since gives a meaning to it."

"Most certainly it does. Your own opinion is, then, that some unforeseen catastrophe has occurred to him?"

"Yes, sir. I believe that he foresaw some danger, or else he would not have talked so. And then I think that what he foresaw happened."

"But you have no notion as to what it could have been?"

"None."

"One more question. How did your mother take the matter?"

"She was angry, and said that I was never to speak of the matter again."

"And your father? Did you tell him?"

"Yes, and he seemed to think, with me, that something had happened, and that I should hear of Hosmer again. As he said, what interest could any one have in bringing me to the door of the church, and then leaving me? Now, if he had borrowed my money, or if he had married me and got my money settled on him, there might be some reason; but Hosmer was very independent about money, and never would look at a shilling of mine. And yet what could have happened? And why could he not write? Oh! it drives me half mad to think of, and I can't sleep a wink at night." She pulled a little handkerchief out of her muff, and began to sob heavily into it.

"I shall glance into the case for you," said Holmes, rising, "and I have no doubt that we shall reach some definite result. Let the weight of the matter rest upon me now, and do not let your mind dwell upon it further. Above all, try to let Mr. Hosmer Angel vanish from your memory, as he has done from your life."

"Then you don't think I'll see him again?"

"I fear not."

"Then what has happened to him?"

"You will leave that question in my hands. I should like an accurate description of him, and any letters of his which you can spare."

"I advertised for him in last Saturday's *Chronicle*," said she. "Here is the slip, and here are four letters from him."

"Thank you. And your address?"

"No. 31, Lyon Place, Camberwell."

"Mr. Angel's address you never had, I understand. Where is your father's place of business?"

"He travels for Westhouse & Marbank, the great claret importers of Fenchurch Street."

"Thank you. You have made your statement very clearly. You will leave the papers here, and remember the advice which I have given you. Let the whole incident be a sealed book, and do not allow it to affect your life."

"You are very kind, Mr. Holmes, but I cannot do that. I shall be true to Hosmer. He shall find me ready when he comes back."

For all the preposterous hat and the vacuous face, there was something noble in the simple faith of our visitor which compelled our respect. She laid her little bundle of papers upon the table, and went her way, with a promise to come again whenever she might be summoned.

Sherlock Holmes sat silent for a few minutes with his finger-tips still pressed together, his legs stretched out in front of him, and his gaze directed upward to the ceiling. Then he took down from the rack the old and oily clay pipe, which was to him as a counselor, and having lighted it, he leaned back in his chair, with thick blue cloud-wreaths spinning up from him, and a look of infinite languor in his face.

"Quite an interesting study, that maiden," he observed. "I found her more interesting than her little problem,

which, by the way, is rather a trite one. You will find parallel cases, if you consult my index, in Andover in '77, and there was something of the sort at the Hague last year. Old as is the idea, however, there were one or two details which were new to me. But the maiden herself was most instructive."

"You appeared to read a good deal upon her which was quite invisible to me," I remarked.

"Not invisible, but unnoticed, Watson. You did not know where to look, and so you missed all that was important. I can never bring you to realize the importance of sleeves, the suggestiveness of thumb-nails, or the great issues that may hang from a boot-lace. Now, what did you gather from that woman's appearance? Describe it."

"Well, she had a slate-colored, broad-brimmed straw hat, with a feather of a brickish red. Her jacket was black, with black beads sewed upon it and a fringe of little black jet ornaments. Her dress was brown, rather darker than coffee color, with a little purple plush at the neck and sleeves. Her gloves were grayish, and were worn through at the right forefinger. Her boots I didn't observe. She had small round, hanging gold earrings, and a general air of being fairly well to do, in a vulgar, comfortable, easy-going way."

Sherlock Homes clapped his hands softly together and chuckled.

"'Pon my word, Watson, you are coming along wonderfully. You have really done very well indeed. It is true that you have missed everything of importance, but you have hit upon the method, and you have a quick eye for color. Never trust to general impressions, my boy, but concentrate yourself upon details. My first glance is always at a woman's sleeve. In a man it is perhaps better first to take the knee of the trouser. As you observe, this woman had plush upon her sleeves, which is a most useful material for showing traces. The double line a little above the wrist, where the typewritist presses against the table, was beautifully defined. The sewing-machine, of the hand type, leaves a similar mark, but only on the left arm, and on the side of it furthest from the thumb, instead of being right across the broadest part, as this was. I then glanced at her face, and observing the dint of a *pince-nez* at either side of her nose, I ventured a remark upon short sight and type-writing, which seemed to surprise her."

"It surprised me."

"But, surely, it was very obvious. I was then much surprised and interested on glancing down to observe that, though the boots which she was wearing were not unlike each other, they were really odd ones, the one having a slightly decorated toecap and the other a plain one. One was buttoned only in the two lower buttons out of five, and the other at the first, third and fifth. Now, when you see that a young lady, otherwise neatly dressed, has come away from home with odd boots, half-buttoned it is no great deduction to say that she came away in a hurry."

"And what else?" I asked, keenly interested, as I always was, by my friend's incisive reasoning.

"I noted, in passing, that she had written a note before leaving home, but after being fully dressed. You observed that her right glove was torn at

the forefinger, but you did not, apparently, see that both glove and finger were stained with violet ink. She had written in a hurry, and dipped her pen too deep. It must have been this morning, or the mark would not remain clear upon the finger. All this is amusing, though rather elementary, but I must go back to business, Watson. Would you mind reading me the advertised description of Mr. Hosmer Angel?"

I held the little printed slip to the light. "Missing," it said, "on the morning of the fourteenth, a gentleman name Hosmer Angel. About five feet seven inches in height; strongly built, sallow complexion, black hair, a little bald in the center, bushy, black side-whiskers and mustache; tinted glasses; slight infirmity of speech. Was dressed, when last seen, in back frock coat faced with silk, black waistcoat, gold Albert chain, and gray Harris tweed trousers, with brown gaiters over elastic-sided boots. Known to have been employed in an office in Leadenhall Street. Anybody bringing," etc., etc.

"That will do," said Holmes. "As to the letters," he continued, glancing over them, "they are very commonplace. Absolutely no clew in them to Mr. Angel, save that he quotes Balzac once. There is one remarkable point, however, which will no doubt strike you.'

"They are typewritten," I remarked.

"Not only that, but the signature is typewritten. Look at the neat little 'Hosmer Angel' at the bottom. There is a date, you see, but no superscription except Leadenhall Street, which is rather vague. The point about the signature is very suggestive—in fact, we may call it conclusive."

"Of what?"

"My dear fellow, is it possible you do not see how strongly it bears upon the case?"

"I cannot say that I do, unless it were that he wished to be able to deny his signature if an action for breach of promise were instituted."

"No, that was not the point. However, I shall write two letters which should settle the matter. One is to a firm in the city, the other is to the young lady's stepfather, Mr. Windibank, asking him whether he could meet us here at six o'clock tomorrow evening. It is just as well that we should do business with the male relatives. And now, doctor, we can do nothing until the answers to those letters come, so we may put our little problem upon the shelf for the interim."

I had had so many reasons to believe my friend's subtle powers of reasoning, and extraordinary energy in action, that I felt that he must have some solid grounds for the assured and easy demeanor with which he treated the singular mystery which he had been called upon to fathom. Once only had I known him to fail, in the case of the King of Bohemia and of the Irene Adler photograph, but when I looked back to the weird business of the "Sign of Four," and the extraordinary circumstances connected with the "Study in Scarlet," I felt that it would be a strange tangle indeed which he could not unravel.

I left him then, still puffing at his black clay pipe, with the conviction that when I came again on the next evening I would find that he held in his hands all the clews which would lead

up to the identity of the disappearing bridegroom of Miss Mary Sutherland.

A professional case of great gravity was engaging my own attention at the time, and the whole of next day I was busy at the bedside of the sufferer. It was not until close upon six o'clock that I found myself free, and was able to spring into a hansom and drive to Baker Street, half afraid that I might be too late to assist at the *dénouement* of the little mystery. I found Sherlock Holmes alone, however, half asleep, with his long, thin form curled up in the recesses of his armchair. A formidable array of bottles and test-tubes, with the pungent, cleanly smell of hydrochloric acid, told me that he had spent his day in the chemical work which was so dear to him.

"Well, have you solved it?" I asked as I entered.

"Yes. It was the bisulphate of baryta."

"No, no; the mystery!" I cried.

"Oh, that! I thought of the salt that I have been working upon. There was never any mystery in the matter, though, as I said yesterday, some of the details are of interest. The only drawback is that there is no law, I fear, that can touch the scoundrel."

"Who was he, then, and what was his object in deserting Miss Sutherland?"

The question was hardly out of my mouth, and Holmes had not yet opened his lips to reply, when we heard a heavy footfall in the passage, and a tap at the door.

"This is the girl's stepfather, Mr. James Windibank," said Holmes. "He has written to me to say that he would be here at six. Come in!"

The man who entered was a sturdy, middle-sized fellow, some thirty years of age, clean shaven, and sallow skinned, with a bland, insinuating manner, and a pair of wonderfully sharp and penetrating gray eyes. He shot a questioning glance at each of us, placed his shiny top hat upon the sideboard, and, with a slight bow, sidled down into the nearest chair.

"Good evening, Mr. James Windibank," said Holmes. "I think this typewritten letter is from you, in which you made an appointment with me for six o'clock?"

"Yes, sir. I am afraid that I am a little late, but I am not quite my own master, you know. I am sorry that Miss Sutherland has troubled you about this little matter, for I think it is far better not to wash linen of the sort in public. It was quite against my wishes that she came, but she is a very excitable, impulsive girl, as you may have noticed, and she is not easily controlled when she has made up her mind on a point. Of course, I did not mind you so much, as you are not connected with the official police, but it is not pleasant to have a family misfortune like this noised abroad. Besides, it is a useless expense, for how could you possibly find this Hosmer Angel?"

"On the contrary," said Holmes, quietly, "I have every reason to believe that I will succeed in discovering Mr. Hosmer Angel."

Mr. Windibank gave a violent start, and dropped his gloves. "I am delighted to hear it," he said.

"It is a curious thing," remarked

Holmes, "that a typewriter has really quite as much individuality as a man's handwriting. Unless they are quite new no two of them write exactly alike. Some letters get more worn than others, and some wear only on one side. Now, you remark in this note of yours, Mr. Windibank, that in every case there is some little slurring over the *e*, and a slight defect in the tail of the *r*. There are fourteen other characteristics, but those are the more obvious."

"We do all our correspondence with this machine at the office, and no doubt it is a little worn," our visitor answered, glancing keenly at Holmes with his bright little eyes.

"And now I will show you what is really a very interesting study, Mr. Windibank," Holmes continued. "I think of writing another little monograph some of these days on the typewriter and its relation to crime. It is a subject to which I have devoted some little attention. I have here four letters which purport to come from the missing man. They are all typewritten. In each case, not only are the *e's* slurred and the *r's* tailless, but you will observe, if you care to use my magnifying lens, that the fourteen other characteristics to which I have alluded are there as well."

Mr. Windibank sprung out of his chair, and picked up his hat. "I cannot waste time over this sort of fantastic talk, Mr. Holmes," he said. "If you can catch the man, catch him, and let me know when you have done it."

"Certainly," said Holmes, stepping over and turning the key in the door. "I let you know, then, that I have caught him!"

"What! where?" shouted Mr. Windibank, turning white to his lips, and glancing about him like a rat in a trap.

"Oh, it won't do—really it won't," said Holmes, suavely. "There is no possible getting out of it, Mr. Windibank. It is quite too transparent, and it was a very bad compliment when you said that it was impossible for me to solve so simple a question. That's right! Sit down, and let us talk it over."

Our visitor collapsed into a chair, with a ghastly face, and a glitter of moisture on his brow. "It—it's not actionable," he stammered.

"I am very much afraid that it is not; but between ourselves, Windibank, it was as cruel, and selfish, and heartless a trick in a petty way as ever came before me. Now, let me just run over the course of events, and you will contradict me if I go wrong."

The man sat huddled up in his chair, with his head sunk upon his breast, like one who is utterly crushed. Holmes stuck his feet up on the corner of the mantel-piece, and, leaning back with his hands in his pockets, began talking, rather to himself, as it seemed, than to us.

"The man married a woman very much older than himself for her money," said he, "and he enjoyed the use of the money of the daughter as long as she lived with them. It was a considerable sum, for people in their position, and the loss of it would have made a serious difference. It was worth an effort to preserve it. The daughter was of a good, amiable disposition, but affectionate and warm-hearted in her ways, so that it was evident that with

her fair personal advantages, and her little income, she would not be allowed to remain single long. Now her marriage would mean, of course, the loss of a hundred a year, so what does her step-father do to prevent it? He takes the obvious course of keeping her at home, and forbidding her to seek the company of people of her own age. But soon he found that that would not answer forever. She became restive, insisted upon her rights, and finally announced her positive intention of going to a certain ball. What does her clever step-father do then? He conceives an idea more creditable to his head than to his heart. With the connivance and assistance of his wife, he disguised himself, covered those keen eyes with tinted glasses, masked the face with a mustache and a pair of bushy whiskers, sunk that clear voice into an insinuating whisper, and doubly secure on account of the girl's short sight, he appears as Mr. Hosmer Angel, and keeps off other lovers by making love himself."

"It was only a joke a first," groaned our visitor. "We never thought that she would have been so carried away."

"Very likely not. However that may be, the young lady was very decidedly carried away, and having quite made up her mind that her stepfather was in France, the suspicion of treachery never for an instant entered her mind. She was flattered by the gentleman's attentions, and the effect was increased by the loudly expressed admiration of her mother. Then Mr. Angel began to call, for it was obvious that the matter should be pushed as far as it would go, if a real effect were to be produced. There were meetings, and an engagement, which would finally secure the girl's affections from turning toward any one else. But the deception could not be kept forever. These pretended journeys to France were rather cumbrous. The thing to do was clearly to bring the business to an end in such a dramatic manner that it would leave a permanent impression upon the young lady's mind, and prevent her from looking upon any other suitor for some time to come. Hence those vows of fidelity exacted upon a Testament, and hence also the allusions to a possibility of something happening on the very morning of the wedding. James Windibank wished Miss Sutherland to be so bound to Hosmer Angel, and so uncertain as to his fate, that for ten years to come, at any rate, she would not listen to another man. As far as the church door he brought her, and then, as he could go no further, he conveniently vanished away by the old trick of stepping in at one door of a four-wheeler and out at the other. I think that that was the chain of events, Mr. Windibank!"

Our visitor had recovered something of his assurance while Holmes had been talking, and he rose from his chair now with a cold sneer upon his pale face.

"It may be so, or it may not, Mr. Holmes," said he; "but if you are so very sharp you ought to be sharp enough to know that it is you who are breaking the law now, and not me. I have done nothing actionable from the first, but as long as you keep that door locked you lay yourself open to an action for assault and illegal constraint."

"The law cannot, as you say, touch you," said Holmes, unlocking and throwing open the door, "yet there

never was a man who deserved punishment more. If the young lady has a brother or a friend, he ought to lay a whip across your shoulders. By Jove!" he continued, flushing up at the sight of the bitter sneer upon the man's face, "it is not part of my duties to my client, but here's a hunting crop handy, and I think I shall just treat myself to—" He took two swift steps to the whip but before he could grasp it there was a wild clatter of steps upon the stairs, the heavy hall door banged, and from the window we could see Mr. James Windibank running at the top of his speed down the road.

"There's a cold-blooded scoundrel!" said Holmes laughing as he threw himself down into his chair once more. "That fellow will rise from crime to crime until he does something very bad and ends on a gallows. The case has, in some respects, been not entirely devoid of interest."

"I cannot now entirely see all the steps of your reasoning," I remarked.

"Well, of course it was obvious from the first that this Mr. Hosmer Angel must have some strong object for his curious conduct, and it was equally clear that the only man who really profited by the incident, as far as we could see, was the stepfather. Then the fact that the two men were never together, but that the one always appeared when the other was away, was suggestive. So were the tinted spectacles and the curious voice, which both hinted at a disguise, as did the bushy whiskers. My suspicions were all confirmed by his peculiar action in typewriting his signature, which, of course, inferred that his handwriting was so familiar to her that she would recognize even the smallest sample of it. You see all these isolated facts, together with many minor ones, all pointed in the same direction."

"And how did you verify them?"

"Having once spotted my man, it was easy to get corroboration. I knew the firm for which this man worked. Having taken the printed description, I eliminated everything from it which could be the result of a disguise—the whiskers, the glasses, the voice, and I sent it to the firm with a request that they would inform me whether it answered to the description of any of their travelers. I had already noticed the peculiarities of the typewriter, and I wrote to the man himself at his business address, asking him if he would come here. As I expected, his reply was typewritten, and revealed the same trivial but characteristic defects. The same post brought me a letter from Westhouse & Marbank, of Fenchurch Street, to say that the description tallied in every respect with that of their employé, James Windibank. *Voilà tout!*"

"And Miss Sutherland?"

"If I tell her she will not believe me. You may remember the old Persian saying, 'There is danger for him who taketh the tiger cub, and danger also for whoso snatches a delusion from a woman.' There is as much sense in Hafiz as in Horace, and as much knowledge of the world."

The Murder in the Mayor's Parlor

CHAPTER I

THE LONDON express, stopping for a bare minute in the little station of Lyncaster, set down a single passenger, a quietly-dressed, middle-aged, spectacled man, whom casual observers, had they looked at him at all, would have taken for a member of the professional classes, a doctor, a solicitor, a chartered accountant. The few people on the platform paid no attention to him; within a moment of his arrival he had given up his ticket, passed through the booking-office, and was rapidly walking up the road to the town,—a collection of ancient houses set on the ridge of a low hill, from the crown of which two objects —the high roof of the old Moot Hall and the square tower of the parish church—stood out prominently against the glow of the December sunset. Within five minutes he was in the heart of the town—a market-place which looked, at first glance and in that uncertain light, as if nothing had altered in it since the Middle Ages. Gabled and timbered houses, diamond-paned windows, queer chimney-stacks, a pavement of cobble-stones, a pillared and canopied market cross, the old church at one end, the Moot Hall at the other —these things seemed to make up the whole of Lyncaster, save for a few narrow and equally ancient streets which opened out of the square at various unexpected angles. It needed but one sharp, shrewd glance on the part of the stranger to see that he was now in the midst of one of those antique English boroughs which are becoming rarer with every generation, and wherein life apparently still takes its tone and color from the past.

But the man from London wasted no time in looking around. His quick eyes had at once fallen on two words painted on a projecting lamp, and thrown into prominence by the flare of a gas-jet. Those two words were Police Station—he made for the door beneath them, as a business-like man makes for the object which demands his immediate attention. The door was half open; within, in a barely furnished office, hung about with official-looking papers and bills, a sleepy-looking young constable was writing at a stand-up desk. He lifted his face—the face of a rustic promoted from the plow—and opened his mouth as if to signify that his ears were also open.

"Superintendent Sutton in?" asked the stranger. "Then tell him, if you please, that Detective-Sergeant Milgrave, from New Scotland Yard, is here."

The constable, awed to silence by this announcement, took one hasty glance at the London detective, and lumbered into an inner room. He muttered his news to some person who sat within, then turned and beckoned. Milgrave walked sharply forward, to

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From the "Secret of the Barbican" by J. S. Fletcher. Copyright by George H. Doran & Co., 1925.

be met by a big, burly man, who held out a stout fist, and showed unmistakable pleasure and relief at his visitor's coming.

"I'm right glad to see you, sir," he said, pulling forward an elbow-chair to the edge of a blazing fire. "We're not much used to this sort of thing in these parts, you know, and we want a Londoner to take a look in at this affair. I suppose," he went on, motioning Milgrave to seat himself—"I suppose you'll have heard the facts of the case—read 'em in the newspapers, of course?"

"No!" answered Milgrave. He set down his suitcase, unbuttoned his overcoat, and took a seat. "No! I know nothing, except that there's been a murder here, and that I'm sent down, at your request, to help to investigate it. I saw headlines in the papers, certainly, but I didn't read what was underneath them. I don't know anything. That's my way, superintendent—I like my facts at first hand. And so you'll perhaps tell me all about it, at once."

"You wouldn't like to take something first?" asked the superintendent, with rural solicitude. "It's a long journey, and——"

"No, thank you—business first," responded Milgrave. "Let me know what's been done, and what's to be done, first of all. I'll see to myself when I'm posted up. Tell me all you can."

The superintendent, a bluff, hearty-looking individual, who obviously felt great interest in the personality of this man from the Criminal Investigation Department, drew his own chair to the fire, and shook his head as he dropped into it.

"It's a queer do—as we say in these parts," he remarked. "I never heard of a queerer, and I've been thirty and odd years in the force, Mr. Milgrave. Well, I'm a poor hand at telling a tale, but I'll put it to you in as good order as I can. Now, then, to be what we may term systematic about it, this is Thursday, December 10, 1914, isn't it? Very well, on the night of day before yesterday—Tuesday, December 8—our young mayor, Mr. Guy Hannington, came into the Moot Hall by the front entrance, out of the market-place, and went up to the mayor's parlor. That was at half-past eight o'clock. The person—the only person—who saw him come in was the caretaker, Learoyd, a pensioned policeman. Learoyd and his wife live in the ground floor rooms of the Moot Hall—you can't enter at all from the front without passing their door and window, as I shall show you presently. Learoyd was standing at his door when his worship came in at the entry, and he asked him if there was aught he could do. His worship said no; he was only going up to the mayor's parlor to look at some papers. He went up, and Learoyd and his wife sat down to their supper.

"A good hour passed; Learoyd remarked to his missis that his worship was stopping upstairs a longish time. Then he went out into the entry and smoked his pipe a bit, expecting the mayor to come down. But he didn't come, and didn't come, and it got to ten o'clock, which is Learoyd's time for locking up. So, after a while, Learoyd got uneasy, and he went upstairs and listened at the door. He

heard naught—no moving about, nothing. So at last he knocked—and got no answer. Then he opened the door. And he saw at once that something was wrong, for there was the poor young gentleman lying across the hearthrug, between his desk and the fireplace, arms stretched out, and as still as could be!"

"Dead?" asked Milgrave.

"Dead as a door-nail, sir!" replied the superintendent. "There was no doubt of that. Learoyd just took one look at him—he was lying on his back, and the light was full on—and then he hurried down for his wife and sent her for Dr. Winford who lives in the market-place, and for me—I live just around the corner. Dr. Winford and me got there together. The doctor just looked him over and said he'd been dead quite an hour. And as to how he'd come by his death, he'd been stabbed!"

"Stabbed, eh?" remarked Milgrave. "Stabbed!"

"Stabbed through the heart," said the superintendent. "And," he continued, with a significant shake of the head, "from the back. Dr. Winford, he says that the mayor had been writing, or was writing, at his desk when the murderer drove a knife, or something of that sort, clean through his heart from behind. He says—the doctor—that he'd leap up, throw out his arms, twist round, and fall where he was found, on his back. He says, too, that death would be practically instantaneous."

"Learoyd never heard anything—no sound of a fall, or a cry?" asked Milgrave.

"Nothing! But you've got to remember that our Moot Hall is one of the very oldest buildings in England," answered the superintendent. "You'll see for yourself that the walls and floors are of a tremendous thickness—eight to twelve feet thick in places. No, Learoyd had heard nothing. And there were no signs of any struggle. Everything was in its place. His worship had begun a letter—written the date, and 'My dear sir.' That and an agenda-paper for the next council meeting were on his blotting-paper; his pen was on the floor. There wasn't a sign that anybody but himself had been in the room. And Learoyd had never seen or heard anybody go up there after the Mayor."

"Still, somebody could have gone up?" suggested Milgrave.

"Might have gone up while Learoyd and his wife were at their supper," assented the superintendent. "But it's unlikely—at least, at first sight—for, as you'll see, there's a big glass panel in their door, through which you can see the staircase, and Learoyd sat facing it while he was at table. We can't hear of anybody who saw a soul enter or leave between half-past eight and ten o'clock. Still, there must have been somebody—the murderer—because there's no other entrance."

"No back entrance?" observed Milgrave.

"Not at that hour. The back entrance is closed at six, when the clerks go away," replied the superintendent. "No; whoever did it must have slipped in very quietly, just when Learoyd happened to have his back turned, and have got out again in the same fashion."

"Suspect anyone?" asked Milgrave.

"Why," answered the superintendent, with a deprecating laugh, as if the suggestion was not worthy of mention, "there is some talk in the town about an Italian chap, a sort of showman, who got into trouble here some few months since. Mr. Hannington was the magistrate who sent him to prison, and the fellow was understood to make a threat against him. Of course, we're trying to trace the man, but——"

"Just tell me about the mayor," interrupted Milgrave. "We'll leave the Italian. Who was the mayor? How long had he been mayor? Was he popular, or disliked? Had he any enemies in the town, or elsewhere? Give me any details, of that sort."

"I should say a more popular young fellow never stepped," answered the superintendent, heartily. "Most popular, sir. Everybody liked him. Never heard a word against him from any quarter. His family's the principal family in the town; they've lived at the Manor Court since old Henry the Eighth's days. They're bankers—the principal bank belongs to them. This young Mr. Guy—his father died just as he was leaving Cambridge, so he became head of the family and chief proprietor of the bank at a very early age, only a couple of years ago. He soon showed that he was a very keen business man, and he began to take a strong interest in the borough affairs as soon as he settled down here. And this year he was elected mayor—been mayor just a month when he was murdered."

"Just a month!" soliloquized Milgrave. "Um—a keen business man—took a strong interest in municipal matters, eh? Was anybody against his election as mayor?"

"Not a soul, sir—unanimously elected," replied the superintendent. "Of course, both his father and his grandfather had been Mayors of Lyncaster in their time—ay, and their grandfathers before them. Our charter's a very old one, Mr. Milgrave—time of Edward the Third. We're an old community."

"So I observed from a mere glance round," said Milgrave. "Well, this is a queer business, superintendent. You haven't a clue of any sort?"

"Not the ghost of one," replied the superintendent. "I don't believe in that Italian notion myself. This is a very small town. It's almost impossible that a foreigner could come in, or go out, without being observed. Besides, supposing this Italian did come back, how could he know that the mayor was to be found in his parlor at that particular hour? No, sir. And yet I can't think who—who could want to kill this poor young gentleman."

"Was Mr. Hannington married?" asked Milgrave.

"No; single—lived with his mother and two sisters," answered the superintendent. "A fine way they're in about him, too, poor things!"

"Do they know whether he had any enemies—anybody who had any reason for wanting to get rid of him?" suggested the detective. "On the very face of it, you know, there must have been some motive for the murder. I conclude, of course, that it wasn't robbery. Well, it may have been revenge.

It may have been jealousy. Had Mr. Hannington any love affair?"

"Now, that's been speculated on," answered the superintendent; "but, according to his mother, he hadn't and what's more, never had had."

"So far as she's aware, that is," observed Milgrave. He rose from his chair and buttoned his overcoat. "Well," he went on, "let's have a look round your Moot Hall, particularly the mayor's parlor."

The superintendent took his visitor out into the market-place, and across to the ancient building in which the affairs of the town had been conducted for so many centuries. Darkness had now fallen over Lyncaster, but Milgrave could make out the lines and general appearance of the Moot Hall by the light of the gas-lamps which flared from various stalls set up on the cobble stones. That it was a place of great antiquity he saw at once. Without making any pretense to any deep knowledge of architecture, he knew that this old building had probably been looking down on Lyncaster market-place in, at any rate, the later Tudor days. But he was not just then so much interested in its antiquity as in its relation to the crime which he was charged to investigate, and he proceeded to look over the place in systematic and business-like fashion.

CHAPTER II

The Moot Hall formed the center of a group of ancient buildings which almost completely enclosed one side of the market-place. It was entered by an archway which led into a vaulted hall. On one side of this hall lay the rooms in which the caretaker and his wife lived. A glass-paneled door and a small window looked out of the living-room into the hall, and commanded a clear view of the wide stone staircase by which access was gained to the upper apartments. These apartments were few in numbers. On the first floor was the council-chamber, a committee-room, the town clerk's private office, and the mayor's parlor; on the second some smaller rooms, used chiefly as storehouses for the municipal archives. Above that was a vast attic, or lumber-room, in the high roof. All these various apartments and places were contained in the front of the building; through a door in the lobby of the first floor, entrance was obtained to a newer wing, in which the corporation offices were located. And, according to fixed rule, that door was locked and bolted by Learoyd at six o'clock every evening. It was, therefore, impossible for any person to enter the old, the front, part of the Moot Hall from the back after that hour.

"And Learoyd's positive," said the superintendent, "dead positive, that on that night he locked up just as usual, and hung the key in his parlor. So nobody could have got to the mayor in that way."

"There's the possibility that the murderer had hid himself somewhere in these old rooms before the mayor came," remarked Milgrave. "That's how it strikes me, anyhow. Hid himself, did his work, and sneaked out while Learoyd was busy with his supper. It wouldn't take him a second,

you know, to slip out into the market-place."

They were standing on the threshold of the mayor's parlor just then, and Milgrave turned back into it and took another look around. The room had been left exactly as it was found when Learoyd made his terrifying discovery: the desk, the chair were precisely as the ill-fated young mayor had left them. There on the carpet and hearthrug was the terrible stain which signified so much. But Milgrave, who had already seen all this, did not look at it again. This time he was noting the antique beauty of the room—its groined roof, its vast fireplace, the mullioned windows, the fine oak paneling, black with age, the dusky oil paintings of dead mayors and local celebrities, the fine old Queen Anne furnishings, the big oak chest. It was a fit scene for many things—for the deliberations of the town graybeards, for the dispensing of that hospitality for which mayors are so famous—but not for a foul murder. He suddenly turned away, and, tapping his companion on the arm, went silently out of the room.

"Do you know what I'm wondering, superintendent?" he asked abruptly, when the elder man had locked the door, and they were going side by side down the wide stone stairs. "Can you guess?"

"Not at all, sir," replied the superintendent. "Something deep, eh?"

Milgrave laughed—a grim, slightly cynical laugh.

"Not so deep, perhaps," he answered. "No; I'm just wondering, not who it was that killed Mr. Hannington, but why he killed him—why? Motive, you know, superintendent, motive! If I could lay my mind on a motive—ah, I think I should soon lay my hands on a man. However, at present I'll get my bag, put myself up at the Lyncaster Arms yonder, eat my supper, and reflect."

Milgrave began to reflect as soon as he had quitted Superintendent Sutton's company, and he continued to reflect, and to surmise, and to speculate, and to invent theories, and to devise all manner of suggestions and possibilities during the next twenty-four hours—all without result. That evening, having installed himself at the old-fashioned hotel in the market-place and refreshed his inner man, he interviewed several people in Sutton's company. He interviewed more people next morning and at various intervals during the day. He got no light from anybody—no one had a single suggestion to make. The dead man's relatives could tell nothing beyond what Milgrave already knew; the great men of the town, Aldermen, councilors, magistrates, were frankly puzzled. The corporation officials were utterly bewildered.

The inquest, held at noon on that second day, revealed nothing; the only fact that was beyond dispute was that someone evilly disposed had obtained access to the mayor's parlor, while the mayor was in it on that evening of December 8, and had stabbed him to death. How the person had obtained access did not seem a very important point. The hall of the Moot Hall was not over well lighted at night. Learoyd and his wife were at supper for some time; anyone having this murderous

intention in his heart could easily have slipped up the stairs unobserved.

The only point raised at the inquest which interested Milgrave was the opinion of the doctor as to the nature of the weapon used by the murderer. The doctor said that that weapon must have been a stiletto or finely-pointed dagger; the rapier of other days would have caused such a wound. The mention of stilettos made those preesnt think of the vindictive Italian who had muttered what had appeared to be threats against Hannington when sent to prison. But during that day a telegram informed Sutton that the Italian was pursuing his career as showman in a far-off part of the country, and had certainly not been within a hundred miles of Lyncaster on the night of the murder. And at nightfall, on the second day of his arrival in the town, Milgrave was as wise as ever. There was no clue; nobody had come under suspicion. The Lyncaster murder promised, in good sooth, to be one of those mysteries which are never solved.

Milgrave was sitting over a late supper that night, wondering if the reason of the murder might not be found in some by-gone passage of young Hannington's life—some episode, say, of his college days—when Sutton came to the hotel, evidently primed with news. The superintendent closed the door of Milgrave's private sitting-room with great caution, and, in spite of their privacy, he dropped his voice to a whisper as he advanced to the detective's chair.

"Now, then," he said, "I've heard something."

"Much?" asked Milgrave.

"Can't say whether it'll turn out to be much, little, or nothing; but it's something," answered the superintendent. "Did you notice, when you were at the inquest this morning, a queer-looking old chap that sat in a corner of the court—strange character in appearance?"

"No," replied Milgrave. "I never looked round the court at all. This old man, then—"

"Old chap of the name of Anthony Mallalieu, but commonly called Snuffy Mallalieu, from a habit of his," answered Sutton. "He's one of the oldest men in Lyncaster, a regular patriarch, and one of the characters of the town. Keeps a queer odds-and-ends shop where he sells all sorts of old things. He's a bit of an antiquary and so on. I saw him in court to-day, and just now I got this from him."

He handed the detective a scrap of the whitey-brown paper which is used in small shops for wrapping up odds-and-ends. On it Milgrave saw a few words traced with what had evidently been the sediment of a very muddy bottle of cheap ink.

"Mr. Sutton.—If you like to come and see me to-night, and bring that London gentleman with you, it may be to your advantage.—Yours truly,

"A. Mallalieu."

Milgrave smiled at the crabbed handwriting as he handed the scrap of paper back to his visitor.

"You think—what?" he asked.

"He's a deep 'un, is Snuffy Mallalieu," said Sutton. "He knows something. I noticed this morning how he

was taking everything in at that inquest. We'd best go round and see him."

Milgrave had seen some strange places in his long experience, but never anything quite so extraordinary as the house and shop to which Sutton presently led him. The shop, which opened on a quiet alley behind the Moot Hall, was crammed from floor to ceiling with what most people would have called rubbish—old furniture, old glass, old brass, old pictures—odds-and-ends of every description without order, arrangement, or sequence, thick and black with the accumulated dust of ages.

There was scarcely room to turn in it; there seemed to be less room in the gloomy house behind, where passages, stairs, every nook and corner was piled high with similar goods.

A shadowy figure piloted them from the half-lighted shop through a narrow passage to a parlor beyond, filled with strange things and permeated with an atmosphere of gin, onions, and strong tobacco. Then the shadowy figure turned up the wick of a lamp, and Milgrave found himself staring at the queerest old man he had ever seen in his life, the sort of man who might have been imagined by Dickens or drawn by Doré.

He was very old and very dirty; his garments, of the style of the Regency, would have disgraced any scarecrow; there was a strong probability that he never took them off, and only put on a clean shirt once a year. Altogether, he was anything but nice to look at or be near, and Milgrave was thankful that he and Sutton were smoking strong cigars. But out of the old fellow's face, so wrinkled and scarred that it looked as if its skin—properly stretched—would have covered half-a-dozen human countenances, gleamed a pair of unusually bright, knowing eyes, and one of them favored the two men with a decided wink as a hand, that was suggestively like a bird's claw, pointed them to a dilapidated sofa—the only thing in the room on which a seat was available.

"All safe here," said the old man, in a much stronger and firmer voice than Milgrave expected to hear from such an ancient atomy. "I slipped the bolt in the shop door when you came in, Sutton, so we shan't be interrupted. Your servant, Mr. Man-from-London—you look a sharp 'un! Quiet and close and sharp—them's the sort—eh, Sutton? Well, well! but you must have a drop to drink. I drink gin myself, but I'll give you some whiskey that's been in bottle—ay, five-and-twenty years. I'll lay aught neither of you ever put lips to its like!"

Milgrave would have refused this offer of hospitality, but Sutton gave him a nudge and a look; he therefore remained quiescent while the queer old figure, bustling about in its strange surroundings, produced a sealed bottle and dexterously drew the cork.

"I bought two dozen of that whiskey at Lord Felborough's sale twenty-five years ago," he said. "I had it all specially corked and sealed and I've seen to the renewing of the corks at proper times. Now, then, here's what you might be surprised to see in this den, Mr. Man-from-London — clean glasses and pure water. Best crystal

in two respects, eh, Sutton? Now, I'll help you, and then I'll help myself to a drop of my liquor—never touch aught but gin—and then we'll talk. A bit of talk—illuminative talk—is what you both want, eh?"

"Light—certainly," answered Milgrave.

"Ay, light!" exclaimed the old man, seating himself on a pile of leather-bound folios. "Light on darkness—what? You want to know who killed young Hannington, my lads, don't you?"

"Do you know?" asked Milgrave.

Snuffy Mallalieu's sharp eyes fastened themselves on the detective's with a shrewd twinkle. He suddenly bent forward and slapped Milgrave's knee with the claw-like hand.

"How old do you think I am, young man?" he asked.

"Eighty," replied Milgrave, promptly.

"You're wrong. I was an old fellow when Sutton there was a young man," retorted Snuffy Mallalieu. "I'm ninety-seven years old. If you doubt it, you can go and search the parish register. Ninety-seven! And sound in mind, body, and estate. Never wore glasses in my life, and still got the necessary teeth, and still as good of hearing as ever. I shall live to be well over a hundred."

"You're a marvel!" said Milgrave. He was wondering what all this was going to lead to, but he knew it was best to let the old fellow take things in his own way and at his own pace. "A marvel! Ninety-seven! A great age."

"Naturally, a man that's lived ninety-seven years in a place knows something about it," remarked the old man. "Sutton there can tell you that there's not much that I don't know about Lyncaster."

"Nobody knows more, I'll be bound!" assented Sutton heartily. "That's a certainty."

"Happen I know a bit more than I'm known to know," said Snuffy Mallalieu, with another glance at Milgrave. "Well, now, there's been a bit of doubt as to whether whoever it was that killed the young mayor went into the Moot Hall by the front—eh?"

The two listeners pricked their ears; this was something like coming to a point. But neither spoke, and the old man laughed with the slightly teasing glee of conscious knowledge. Then his face changed and became serious.

"Until this affair happened," he said, bending towards his visitor, "I believed that there wasn't a soul but me who knew a secret about our Moot Hall. I thought I was the last to know it. Now I think—nay, I'm sure—somebody else knows it. It's this—there's a secret way into the old place!"

CHAPTER III

"WHAT!" exclaimed Sutton.

"That's so," said the old man. "My father, and his father, and his grandfather, lived in our Moot Hall, where Learoyd lives now. They all knew of this secret way, and they passed the knowledge down. It's a way that cuts through the walls, goes down below the market-place, and ends—where do you think?"

Milgrave made no answer. His sharp wits told him that the usually

stolid man at his side was waking up under the influence of that crafty, wrinkled old face; there was a new atmosphere in those strange surroundings—he himself was falling under its spell. He kept silent. But Sutton's big form stirred uneasily.

"Well—where?" he asked, almost with a growl. "Where, then?"

Snuffy Mallalieu thrust his face still nearer to the two so intently bent on his own. He sank his voice to the ghost of a whisper.

"In a secret staircase in the Bank House!" he answered.

Milgrave felt the superintendent jump in his seat. Then he turned on his companion with a strange look, his back to the old man.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Leggett's! You don't say!"

"Sure," answered Snuffy Mallalieu.

He, too, relapsed into the same silence as the other when he had spoken that one word. Milgrave wondered what the silence meant—to the others, at any rate; to him it merely signified waiting. It seemed quite a long time before Sutton relieved his feelings with a big letting loose of his held-in breath, and a fervent exclamation.

"By Jove!" he said, in a tense whisper. "Who'd ha' thought it?"

"Just so," assented the old man. He pulled out an ancient snuff-box, took a hearty pinch, and looked at the superintendent. "You see what that means, Sutton?" he continued. "It's struck you! Mr. Man-from-London here doesn't see."

"Frankly, I don't," said Milgrave.

"Simple," remarked Snuffy Mallalieu. "Mr. Leggett, who lives at the Bank House, is a gentleman with a taste for antiquities and archæology. Also, he's for a good many years been manager of Hannington's Bank—trusted and responsible manager. Further, for ten years he's been borough treasurer. Eh?"

Sutton, who had been sitting open-mouthed, holding his glass in his hand, suddenly drank off his whiskey and rose. He rapped the old man's shoulder.

"You can show us where this secret way is?" he said.

"Ay, for sure!" answered Snuffy Mallalieu. "And whenever ye like."

"Now, then," said Sutton. "Sooner the better. Come across with us."

The old man shook his head.

"Not till you're certain that we shall be by ourselves," he said. "You'd better go and arrange matters with Learoyd. Let him send his missis to bed at their usual time, and then let us in. I'll meet you outside there at just after ten. Mind you, Sutton, I don't want all the town to know that I've told you. It's been a family secret up to now, but—now——"

"What?" asked Sutton.

Snuffy Mallalieu laughed mirthlessly.

"Now I think Leggett's found it out," he replied. "Well, till ten, then."

Sutton took Milgrave out of the odds-and-ends shop and drew him into a quiet corner.

"Do you know what that means—may mean, mister?" he whispered. "You heard Leggett's name mentioned? Manager of the bank—borough treasurer—ay, but he's more than that—he's trustee for I don't know how many families in town! There's been a pile of brass entrusted to Leggett in this

place of late years. A quiet, very respectable, smooth-tongued gentleman —universally respected, as the term is. Leggett! But by the living jingo—suppose—suppose——"

"I want to hear more before I suppose anything," said Milgrave. "You know more than I do. Suppose what?"

"Young Hannington was a keen 'un about business matters," replied Sutton. "I know he was beginning to go into things. Supposing he'd found something out—wrong, eh, with money matters? Bank funds, borough funds —what? Now, do you see? And what's to be done?"

Milgrave's mind was already made up on that point.

"Have you two or three men that you can thoroughly depend upon?" he asked. "Men to whom you can tell a little and rely on fully?"

"Half-a-dozen," answered the Superintendent, promptly. "Good 'uns!"

"Two will do," said Milgrave. "Let those two keep a quiet eye on that Bank House, back and front, while you and find out what this old man's got to show us. If it's as he says, and if it's as you think it might be, why then——"

He ended with an expressive shake of his head, and hurried the superintendent away in the direction of the police-station.

Milgrave, naturally quick to observe things, had noticed on the first night of his arrival in Lyncaster that the townfolk were evidently in the habit of keeping early hours. By half-past nine the light began to be transferred from the lower to the upper windows, by ten the little town was wrapped in silence and in darkness, save for the two or three lamps left burning in the market-place. It was in this silence and semi-gloom that he and Sutton presently met Snuffy Mallalieu, who, buttoned to the chin in an old horseman's cloak, so ancient that it might have served some eighteenth century highwayman, awaited them in a corner of the Moot Hall entrance. Silently the three were admitted by Learoyd; in silence they went up the stone stairs. At its head Sutton produced a couple of bull's-eye lanterns.

"There are three windows in the mayor's parlor that look out on the market-place," he said. "I don't want anybody to see any big light on in here, so we'll use these things. They'll be useful, too, if we're going to explore this passage that we've heard of."

He unlocked the door of the mayor's parlor as he spoke, and when they had entered he relocked it. Then he set the two lanterns on a center table and turned to the old man.

"Now, then, Mr. Mallalieu," he said. "It's your turn. What's this that you've got to show me?"

Snuffy Mallalieu had moved over to the further end of the room, near the big fireplace, and was looking down at the stain on the carpet and hearthrug, which Milgrave had viewed, and made no comment on, at his first inspection. He looked up from it at the desk and the chair, and slowly nodded his head.

"Ay!" he said, reflectively. "Ay! Just as I expected it would be from what was said at the crowner's 'quest this morning—just! I see how it was done, my lads."

"How what was done?" asked Sutton.

"The murder, of course," answered the old man. "An easy job, though a clever one. Now, attend to me, both of you. As I told you, my father and grandfather were keepers—caretaker you call it now—of this Moot Hall, and their grandfather before them—ay, for two hundred years, as the town books 'll show, Sutton. Consequently, there's not much about the old place that I don't know of. Now, then, you see this mayor's parlor? There's the front, looking on to the market-place, with three windows. Here's the side, overlooking Finkle Gate—it's two windows. By this last window, on this Finkle Gate side, young Hannington had his private desk placed. There it is—there's the chair he sat in when he was stabbed. What's behind that chair? You see—a fine old tapestry curtain, divided in the middle. What's behind that? Come and look."

The old man picked up one of the lanterns, and led his companions to the corner of the room to which he was pointing. Milgrave, who was following him with intense attention, at once perceived what he meant. In the middle of that side of the room a big, canopied fireplace projected well into the apartment; on either side of it there were, consequently, deep recesses. The recess behind the mayor's desk and chair was draped with an antique tapestry curtain. Old Snuffy tapped this with his finger as they advanced to it.

"Now take notice," he said. "When that chair is in its proper place, in front of the desk, its back is separated from this curtain by a space of about eighteen inches. Consequently, a man standing behind that curtain, where it divides—here—could easily reach a man sitting in that chair. And what happened, my lads, when the young mayor was killed, was this—the murderer stood, unknown, behind the curtain, waiting. When the mayor sat down in his chair at the desk and bent forward to do his bit of writing, the murderer put hand and arm through the divide in the curtain and drove his weapon straight into his back. The mayor, as the doctor said, would jump up, twist round, and fall across there, where Learoyd found him. Now, then, where did the murderer go? Why, he went where he came from! Look here!"

Milgrave, closely following these details and suggestions, was impressed by the almost feverish interest, the intense delight with which the old man was making them. It was plain that Snuffy Mallalieu's passion for antiquities was aroused, and that what appealed to him more than anything was his pleasure in explaining to his companions how the secret architecture of that ancient building had furthered the murderer's nefarious designs. The claw-like hand trembled with eagerness as it drew aside the curtain; the crafty eyes glittered as they roved over the dark time-stained paneling of the recess.

"Bring that other lantern, Sutton," commanded the old man, as he swept aside the tapestry. "Shine it on here—here. Mr. Man-from-London, you hold this; I want both hands. Now, then, look—both of you. You see that this recess is paneled, just like all the rest of the room. Queen Anne stuff this, gentlemen, every inch of it! Good,

solid oak that came out of Lyncaster Forest, sound as a bell yet. Now, you can look all this paneling over as closely as you like, and it'll take you a long time to find where the door is that I've told you of. But it's here! And I'll lay you all I've got in my shop to a cracked tea-pot that the man who's discovered the secret of this door and the passage beyond has taken good care to grease the hinges! Now look. You put a finger on that bit of carving there, you press this other bit of carving here —and there you are!"

Under the old man's trembling hands a narrow strip of paneling, five feet by two, slid away in the angle of the recess, and revealed a deep cavity in the solid masonry of the thick wall. And Snuffy Mallalieu, stepping into this, and beckoning the others to follow, took a lantern from one of them, and held it down to the dust of the floor on which they stood.

"What did I tell you?" he said, with a grim chuckle. "There you are—oil! You see, he's oiled the machinery, so that it 'ud open easy. Now do you see the trick of it?"

"What I want to know," said Milgrave, "is—first, does that panel open from this side?"

For answer the old man drew the panel into place, shut it tight, and demonstrated its opening. He looked at the detective with a grin of triumph.

"And, second," continued Milgrave, "where does this passage lead to?"

"Ah!" answered Snuffy Mallalieu. "Now you're talking! That's the really important thing. Come on!"

The passage of which Milgrave had spoken, and into which Sutton was casting dubious and half-frightened glances, went off in the thickness of the masonry behind the built-out fireplace. It was about six feet in height, about two and a half in width. Cobwebs hung from its roof, strange growths showed on its walls. But the dust that lay thick on its floor was dry enough, and the old man chuckled again as he held a lantern down to it.

CHAPTER IV

"Look there!" he said. "Footprints —plenty of 'em. Recent, all of 'em. Now, if you can pick out a nice, separate, distinct one, Mr. Man-from-London, and compare it with somebody's boot, eh?"

"I hope this is safe," remarked Sutton, looking uneasily about him. "No fear of it falling in, is there?"

"It's been safe for three hundred years and more," retorted Snuffy Mallalieu. He marched confidently forward, lantern in hand, until Milgrave had counted some fifteen paces. There a blank wall confronted them; at right angles to it appeared a narrow stairway, evidently cut through another wall. "Now, then," continued the old man, "do you know where we are, Sutton? That's the wall that runs down the side of the big staircase in the hall below. This stair's cut clean through it, right through the foundation, and into a passage, like this, that runs under the market-place. It goes right under Belford the butcher's cellars, and under the cellars of the next two shops, and then into another stair that cuts in the wall of the Bank House, which, I may tell you," he added, turning to Milgrave, "is

an older building—the house part of it, anyway—than this Moot Hall. And in that house it comes out in another panel doorway that opens in Leggett's parlor, close by the fireside. There!"

The two men looked over the old fellow's shoulder into the black chasm of the stair. Sutton sniffed doubtfully at the cold, damp air which hung about them.

"Come back to the mayor's parlor," he said. "We'd best decide what's to be done."

It was at this stage that Milgrave took command. He had been thinking deeply while the old man made his revelations, and he had now decided on the course which he wished to pursue. Once out of the nearest door, and standing near the spot still stained by the dead man's blood, he spoke with decision.

"There's only one thing to do, superintendent," he said. "You and I must call on this Mr. Leggett at once. You must make the excuse that we want to ask him a few questions about Mr. Hannington. Don't frighten him at first, nor later, for that matter."

Sutton looked at Snuffy Mallalieu, and laughed cynically.

"It 'ud take a good deal to frighten Leggett," he observed. "He's as hard and cool a customer as ever I had to deal with."

"All the better," said Milgrave. "Now, then, this is my plan: You and I go straight there; we engage Leggett in what we'll call casual conversation—speculative talk about the murder. It's now twenty minutes to eleven o'clock. You, Mr. Mallalieu, go through this passage and make your way to the secret door in Leggett's house. You've a watch on you! Set it by mine. Good! Now, then, at precisely eleven o'clock you knock on that secret door. Knock loudly—once, twice, thrice—a second or so between each knock. See?"

Sutton looked as if he did not quite see, but the old man nodded and chuckled gleefully.

"Good notion, my lad!" he answered. "I'll do my part; off you go. He's about certain to take you into that parlor; it's his sitting-room. But I'll knock in such a fashion that it'll be heard anywhere in the house. But keep your eyes open; he's one of those quiet chaps that might turn uncommon ugly, is Leggett."

"All right," said Milgrave. "Now, remember, eleven sharp!" He beckoned the superintendent to follow him out of the room, pausing on the stair outside to say a warning word or two to Learoyd. "Now, superintendent," he went on, as he and Sutton crossed the silent market-place, "is this Leggett a married man?"

"No; bachelor," answered Sutton.

"What household does he keep?" asked Milgrave.

"Couple of servants, middle-aged women. We've got to bear this in mind," continued Sutton abruptly. "If he's—what there seems to be a probability that he is, he'll be a dangerous man to tackle. There's two of my men there in that entry opposite the Bank House; hadn't I better tell 'em to keep handy?"

"No—wait," answered Milgrave. "I think you and I can tackle one man, at a pinch. We can watch him without seeming to do so, the thing is to be

alert at eleven o'clock. Now, then, you ring, and do the first talking."

The bank manager himself opened the door of the house, a quaint old building at one side of which stood the modern bank premises. He remained for a moment framed in the doorway, a lamp in his hand, silently regarding his visitors. Milgrave, watching him closely, saw no sign of fear on his face, nor any surprise; all that he showed was a cold disapproval.

"Well," he said, acidly, "what is it, Sutton?"

"Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Leggett," answered the superintendent, apologetically; "but can you give me and Mr. Milgrave here a minute or two? There's one or two little matters that you might be able to help us in, sir; just a small detail or two, you know."

Leggett stood back, motioning them to enter.

"You come at a strange time," he observed coldly. "Was this the only time you could hit on? However, come this way."

He closed the street-door behind them, then turned and preceded them down the hall to a room which Milgrave at once took to be the parlor of which Snuffy Mallalieu had spoken. One glance at it, when Leggett had turned up the light, showed its great age. The floor concealed beneath the thick modern carpet was uneven; the big oak rafters which spanned the low ceiling were bent and twisted. It needed little knowledge to know that behind the paneling of the walls lay ancient stone walls raised by some mason-hand of many a century ago. Instinctively, Milgrave looked towards the fireplace and its surroundings, wondering whereabouts in the highly-polished oak the secret door was. There were evidences of the owner's antiquarian tastes on every hand—in the beautiful old furniture, the cabinets of china and glass, the rare objects displayed on the walls, the old prints and books. But the owner himself was of more interest—a thin, sparely built man, with a cold eye and unsympathetic lips, keen, self-controlled—the sort of man who might not call forth affection, but would doubtless create trust and confidence.

"Sit down," said Leggett, still disapproving and acid. "What is it you want to know? It seems strange to me that you should expect me to be able to tell you anything. I should thing everything that can be told was told at the inquest this morning."

He was looking at Milgrave as he spoke, and the detective was quick to take up the challenge.

"Just so," he answered. "But only on the surface. This affair, of course, is something that depends on more than mere surface information. My duty is to go down as deeply as I can. You haven't any theory of your own, I suppose?"

The bank manager had listened to this with a supercilious smile. It was evident that he had no great idea of detective intelligence.

"If I have, I don't know that I'm bound to communicate it to the police," he said half-musingly. "But, since you ask the question, I don't mind saying that, in my opinion, if you want to get at the secret of Hannington's murder, you'll have to go far back—as far as you can in such a young man's life.

I'm not going to suggest anything, but you must remember that our late mayor spent three years at Cambridge and two in London before he came down here to take up his father's place as head of this bank, and—he may have made enemies. Eh?"

"Quite so," replied Milgrave. "And you think that some enemy contrived a clever entrance to the Moot Hall at a particular moment—the particular moment?"

He was watching Leggett closely now, and he was not slow to see that Leggett was watching him. A subtle gleam of something—was it suspicion, doubt, fear?—stole into the cold, blue eyes, and, instead of an answer coming, a curious silence fell over the three. Milgrave waited a while, and broke it himself.

"Whoever made his way into the mayor's parlor," he said, in a quiet, even voice, "must surely have been remarkably well-acquainted with Lyncaster Moot Hall. No stranger, for instance, would know how to time his entrance so well. The mayor did not usually go to his parlor at that hour every even ing."

The thin lips smiled disagreeably.

"How do you know that Hannington hadn't made an appointment with his murderer?" they asked. "It's all nonsense, of course, about Learoyd not seeing anyone enter or leave. Learoyd was too busy with his supper to attend to things of that sort. A man could easily have slipped in and out; and as to getting away, why, it's not two minutes' walk to the outskirts and the open country from any point of this town, and——"

Milgrave, as if in a fit of absent-mindedness, drew out his watch. It was already but a minute to eleven. He interrupted Leggett as if a chance idea had struck him.

"Of course," he said, indifferently—"of course, there may be means of obtaining entrance to your Moot Hall that I know nothing about. In these old places there are often such entrances—secret passages and suck-like. And——"

He paused, looking at the bank manager as if for information. But even as he paused he saw that the shaft had gone home. A sudden twitch of the man's lips, a new light in his eye; but he laughed cynically, throwing up his head as if in contempt.

"Pshaw!" he said scornfully. "We don't live in the days of walled-up skeletons, and——"

With the first silvery chime of a clock that stood on the mantelpiece the first heavy knock sounded without the paneled oak by which the cynical voice was speaking; and, in spite of long years of training, Leggett sprang to his feet with a sharp cry, twisting round as he rose to stare at the wall whence came this strange summons. It came again, and the two watchers, who had also risen and were quietly moving nearer to him, saw great beads of sweat break out on his forehead. He reeled slightly, stretching out a hand; and as the third and more peremptory knock sounded, he uttered a queer, choking cry and dropped forward into Sutton's arms.

"Fainted!" muttered Milgrave. "Set him down there while I tell one of your men to call the doctor." He went out to the front door, and, returning a mo-

ment later, looked meaningly at the unconscious man. "That was a capital idea, superintendent," he said. "His nerve wasn't up to that. I shouldn't wonder if he fancied that was Hannington's ghost. Well, the next thing'll be to get at his motive. Financial, of course."

Milgrave stayed in Lyncaster long enough to have it proved to him, fully and abundantly, why Leggett killed the mayor. The borough accounts were all wrong—had been cooked and manipulated for many a year. The bank had been robbed, cleverly and systematically; numerous families had been defrauded. And the only thing that he ever wondered about, after Leggett had been safely hanged, was whether the murder would ever have been detected if Snuffy Mallalieu had not lived to his remarkable age in full possession of his remarkable faculties.

Extradition

CHAPTER I

"DOCKBRIDGE," said the District Attorney, coming hurriedly out of his office, "I've got to send you to Seattle. We've just located Andrews there—Sam Andrews of the Boodle Bank. One of Barney Conville's cases, you remember. Here's the Governor's requisition. Barney's down in Ecuador, so McGinnis of the Central Office will go out to make the arrest; but I must have someone to look after the legal end of it—to fight any writ of *habeas corpus*—and handle the extradition proceedings. They might get around a mere policeman, so I'm going to ask you to attend to it. The trip won't be unpleasant, and the auditor will give you a check for your expenses. Remember, now—your job is to *bring Andrews back!*

He handed his assistant a bulky document bedecked with seals and ribbons, and closed the door. Dockbridge gazed blankly after his energetic chief.

"Oh, certainly, certainly! Don't mention it! *Delighted,* I'm sure! Thank you so much!" he exclaimed with polite sarcasm. Then he turned ferociously to a silent figure sitting behind the railing. "Sudden, eh? Don't even ask me if it's convenient! Exiles me for two months! Just drop over to Bombay and buy him a package of cigarettes! Or run across to Morocco and pick up Perdicaris, like a good fellow! Don't you regard him as a trifle *inconsequent?"*

Conville's side partner McGinnis, a gigantic Irishman with extraordinarily long arms and huge hands, climbed disjointedly to his feet.

"In-consequence, is it, Mister Dockbridge?" The words came in a gentle

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roar from the altitudes of his towering form. "Sure, the *in*-consequence of it is that we're to have the pleasure of travellin' togither." He looked big enough to swing the little Assistant lightly upon one shoulder and stride nimbly across the continent with him.

"An iligant thrip it will be! I'm only regretful I can't take me wife along wid me."

Pat's matrimonial troubles were the common property of the entire force. The only person unconscious of their existence was McGinnis himself. His lady, the daughter of fat ex-Detective-Sergeant O'Halloran, made one think inevitably of the small bird that travels through life roosting on the shoulder of the African buffalo. His domestic life would have been one of wild excitement for the average citizen, but McGinnis had a blind and unwavering faith in the perfection of his spouse. Conceive, however, his surprise when the Assistant District Attorney suddenly smote him sharply in the abdomen, and shouted:

"I'll do it!"

"Phwat?" ejaculated Pat.

"Take *my* wife!"

"Yez have none, ye spalpeen!"

"I'll have one by to-morrow!"

"An' is it Miss Peggy ye mane?"

"No other. The county pays part of the bills. I'll make this my wedding trip!"

"God save us, Mr. Dockbridge!" gasped McGinnis. "Ain't he the little divel!" he added to himself delightedly.

Peggy had at first opposed strenuously Jack's proposition. The idea of going on one's honeymoon with a policeman! Yes, it was all right to combine business and pleasure on occasion, but one did not usually associate business with marriage—at least she hoped she did not—for Jack Dockbridge knew he hadn't a cent, and neither had she. He explained guardedly that that was the principal reason in favor of the plan. They would have part of their expenses paid.

Peggy, being a New Englander, acknowledged the force of the arugment but pointed out that there was still the policeman.

Then Dockbridge pictured the West in glowing colors. Why, there were so many bad men out there, one actually needed a body-guard. Had she never heard of the Nagle case? What, not heard of the Nagle case, and she going to marry a lawyer! A newly married pair could not travel alone, unprotected.

Peggy said he was a fraud, an unadulterated fraud—an unabashed liar! Still, she had those furs that had belonged to her mother. She admitted, also, wondering what the Rockies were like. If she did not marry him now, how long would he be gone? Six months?

Jack explained that he might be killed by Indians or desperadoes. In that case the wisdom of her course would undoubtedly be apparent. She could then marry someone else. But that was the reason a policeman would be desirable. And then he was only a sort of policeman himself, anyway. One more would make little difference. In the end they were married.

CHAPTER II

It was a gay little party of three that left Montreal for Vancouver the following Saturday. The red-headed Patrick pruned his speech and proved himself a most entertaining comrade, as he recounted his adventures in securing the return of divers famous criminals under the difficult process of extradition. He had brought safely back "Red" McIntosh from New Orleans, and Trelawney, the English forger, from Quebec; had captured "Strong Arm" Moore in St. Louis, and been an important figure in the old Manhattan Bank cases. He insisted on addressing Dockbridge as "Judge," and introducing him to all strangers as "me distinguished frind, the Disthrick Attorney av Noo York."

There were few passengers for the West, and the triumvirate easily became friendly with the conductors, brakemen, and engine hands upon the various divisions. The trip itself proved one unalloyed delight. Peggy sat for hours spellbound at the windows as the train sang along the frozen rails around the ice-bound shores of Superior and through the snow-mantled forests of Ontario. Sometimes the three in furs and mufflers clung to the reverberating platform of the end car watching the diminishing track, or held their breath in the swaying cab as the engine thundered through the drifts of Manitoba and Assiniboia toward Moose Jaw, Calgary, and the Rockies.

In the monotonous hours across the frozen prairie Peggy learned all the mysteries of the throttle, the magic of the reversing gear, the pressure-valve and the brakes, and once, when there was a clear track for a hundred miles, the driver, with his perspiring brow and frosty back, allowed her slender fingers to guide the dangerous steed. For an hour he stood behind her as she opened and closed the valve, pulled the whistle at his direction and slackened on the curves. She was undeniably pretty. The driver had been stuck on a girl that looked a bit like her out on the Edmonton run. He opined loudly that by the time they reached Vancouver Peggy could send her along about as well as he could himself. He repeated this emphatically, with much blasphemy, to the fireman.

Peggy lived in an ecstasy of happiness. At odd moments she perused diligently her husband's copy of "Moore on Extradition." She didn't intend to be the man of the family—she was too sensible for that—but she saw no reason why a woman should not know something about her husband's profession, particularly when it was as exciting a one as Jack's.

Four days brought them within sight of the mountains, and the next morning, when they stopped for water, the whole range of the Canadian Rockies lay around and above them, their virgin summits sparkling in the winter sun.

"Glad you came, Peg?" shouted Dockbridge, hurling a feather-weight snowball in her direction as she stood on the platform in silent wonder at the scene.

She answered only with a deep inspiration of the dry, cold air.

"Shure, ain't we all av us?" inquired McGinnis, lighting his pipe. "Say, this beats th' Bowery. Th' Tenderloin ain't

in it wid this. I'd loike to camp right here for the rest of me days!"

There was something so unlikely in this, since, apart from the mountains, the only visible object in the landscape was a watering-tank, that they all laughed.

Up they climbed into the glistening teeth of the divide, clearing at last the first Titanic bulwark, now in the darkness of Stygian tunnels, now bathed in glittering ether, until, sweeping down past the whole magnificent range of the Selkirks, they dropped into the boisterous cañon of the Fraser, and knew that their journey was drawing to a close.

The blue shadows of morning melted into the breathless splendor of high noon upon the summit of the world, then, reappearing, faded to purple, azure, gray, until the blazing sun sank in an iridescent line of burning crests. Night fell again, and the stars crowded down upon them like myriads of flickering lamps, while the moon swung in and out behind the giant peaks.

"Shure, 'tis a sad thing we can't ride in a train, drawin' th' county's money foriver!" sighed McGinnis, as the sunset died over the foaming rapids.

"Ah, but we've work to do, Pat!" answered Peggy. "You mustn't forget Sam Andrews and the Boodle Bank. There's fame and fortune waiting for us."

On the run down the coast they held a council of war. Pat was to continue on to Seattle and arrest the fugitive, while Jack and Peggy hastened to Olympia to secure the Governor's recognition of their credentials and his warrant for the deliverance of Andrews to the representatives of the State of New York.

The Governor, a short, fat man, with a black beard, proved unexpectedly tractable, and not only issued the warrant, but invited them both to lunch. It developed that he had graduated from Jack's college. Oh, yes, he knew Andrews! Not a bad sort at all. One of those fellows that under pressure of circumstances had technically violated the law, but a perfect gentleman. Of course he had to honor their requisition, but he was really sorry to see such a decent fellow as Andrews placed under arrest. He was sure that Sam would take the affair in the proper spirit and return with them voluntarily. You must not be too hard on people! Everybody committed crime—inadvertently. There were so many statutes that you never knew when you were stepping over the line. He frankly sympathized with the fugitive, although obliged officially to assist them. You could not help feeling that way about a man you always dined with at the club. Well, the law was the law. He hoped they would have a pleasant trip back. He must return himself to the Council Chamber to a blasted hearing—a delegation of confounded Chinese merchants.

They took the train for Seattle, highly elated. They found McGinnis, together with the prisoner and his lawyer, awaiting them at The Ranier-Grand. Andrews proved to be another stout man, with a brown beard and a pair of genial gray eyes. As the Governor had stated, it was clear that he was a perfect gentleman. He apologized for bringing his lawyer. It was only,

they would understand, to make sure that his arrest was entirely legal. He had no intention of attempting to retard or thwart their purpose in any way. Of course, the whole thing was unfortunate in many respects, but that he should be desired in New York to unravel the complicated affairs of the bank was only natural. Everything could be easily explained, and, in the meantime, the only thing to do was to return with them as quickly as possible. Altogether he was very charming and entirely convincing. He hoped they would not consider him presuming if he suggested that a few days in Seattle would prove interesting to them; there was so much that was beautiful in the way of scenery of easy access; and in the meantime he could get his affairs in shape a little.

Peggy thought that was a splendid idea. It would be mean to take Mr. Andrews away without giving him a chance to say good-bye to his friends, and she wanted to see Victoria and Esquimault, and Tacoma. While Mr. Andrews (in charge of McGinnis) was arranging his business matters, she and Jack could do the sights. In the meantime they could all live together at the hotel, and no one need know that Mr. Andrews was under arrest at all. Jack saw no harm in this, and neither did McGinnis. Andrews was politely grateful. It was most kind of them to treat him with such courtesy. He hastened to assure them they would not have any reason to regret so doing.

Two days passed. The Dockbridges wearied themselves with sight-seeing, while Andrews busied himself with arrangements to depart. The favorable impression made by the prisoner upon his captors had steadily increased, and in a short time they found themselves regarding him in the light of a most agreeable companion whom fate had thrown in their way.

"And now for New York!" exclaimed Jack, lighting his cigar, as they sat around the dinner-table on the evening of the third day after their arrival in Seattle. "How shall we go—Northern Pacific, Union, or The Short Line and across on the Rock Island?"

"Divel a bit do I care," answered Pat comfortably from behind an enormous Manuel Garcia Extravaganza, tendered him by Mr. Andrews. "Th' longer th' better, suits *me*. 'Tis the county pays me, an' I loike ridin' in the cars down to th' ground."

"What is the prettiest way, Mr. Andrews?" inquired Peggy, "You know the country. Where would we see the most mountains?"

Had it not been for the thick clouds of cigar smoke, they would have noticed the flash of Andrews' gray eyes which so quickly died away. He hesitated a moment, as if giving the matter the consideration it deserved.

"There's practically no choice," he replied at length, knocking the ash from his cigar. "They're all lovely at this time of year. The Rock Island route is longer, but perhaps it is the more interesting." He paused doubtfully, then resumed his cigar.

But Peggy, who at the thought of the trip had become all eagerness, had observed his manner.

"You were going to add something, Mr. Andrews; what was it?"

Andrews smiled. "Oh, nothing! I

was about to say that if it wasn't such a tough journey you might go back by the Northern Montana and connect with the Soo. It's a magnificent trip in summer, but I dare say pretty cold in winter. Wonderful scenery, though."

"Let's go!" exclaimed Peggy. "That's what we are after—scenery! I don't care if it *is* cold. I've got my furs. Montana, you say? And the Soo? That sounds like Indians. What do you say, Jack?"

"Oh, I don't mind!" answered her husband. "Andrews knows best. He's been that way. Sure, if you say so."

Andrews hid a smile by lighting another cigar.

CHAPTER III

All day long the snow had been falling steadily in big, fluffy flakes. The heavy train ploughed through dense pine-clad ravines, beside torrents buried far below the snow, under sheds into whose inky blackness the engine plunged as into the bowels of the earth, across vibrating trestles, and up grades that seemed never-ending, where the driving-wheels slipped and ground ineffectually, then clutched the sanded rails and slowly forged onward. For two days it had been thus and from the windows only the gently falling, ever-falling snow met the eye. Heavy clouds shrouded the shoulders of the mountains, and the gorges between them were choked with mist. And onward, upward, always upward groaned the train.

Inside Jack's compartment in the first Pullman sat the four members of our party playing cards, now on the best of terms. They had long since given up condoling upon the weather, and had settled down to making the best of it with cards, chess-board, and books. Between McGinnis and the prisoner flowed an unending stream of anecdotes and adventures. It could not be denied that the erstwhile bank president was a man of much culture and wide reading. He had studied for the bar, and from time to time astounded Dockbridge by the acuteness of his mental processes. This was the afternoon of the second day, and they were just completing their thirteenth rubber of whist.

The snow fell thicker as the light waned; soon the lamps were lighted and the shades were drawn. The through passengers on the train were few, and the good-natured conductor had adopted the party for the trip.

"We're 'most at the top o' the pass," he remarked, as he paused to inspect Jack's hand over his shoulder. "Should ha' made it an hour ago but for this blank snow. I never saw it so thick. Too bad you've missed the whole range, and to-morrow morning we'll be at Souris, and then nothing' but prairie all across Dakota. When you wake up, the mountains 'll be two hundred miles west of you. Hard luck!"

"My trick," said Andrews. "What's that, conductor? Souris to-morrow morning? Any stops to-night?"

"Nope; clear down-hill track all the way. There's a flag station an hour beyond the divide—Ferguson's Gulch, and sometimes we stop for water at Red River. There's no regular station there, and Jim wants to make up time, so I reckon we'll make the run without stoppin'. Are you folks ready for dinner?"

The strain on the wheels suddenly relaxed, and it seemed as though the whole train sighed with relief. Ahead, the engine gave a succession of quick snorts, as if rejoicing at once more reaching a level. The train gathered headway.

"She's over the divide," announced the conductor, taking a bite from the plug of tobacco carefully wrapped in his red silk handkerchief. "Now Jim can let her run."

"What do you call the divide?" asked Peggy.

"The Lower Kootenay," he answered. "Oh, it's great here in summer! Finest thing in Canada, in my opinion."

"In Canada!" exclaimed Dockbridge, with a start. "What do you mean? Are we in Canada?"

"You've been in Canada since three o'clock," was the reply. "We cross the lower left-hand corner of Alberta—look on the map there in the folder. After makin' the divide we drop right back into Montana. They couldn't cross the Rockies at this point without leavin' the States for a few miles."

The conductor arose and unfolded the map.

"Ye see, here's where we leave Clarke Fork, then we skirt this range, turn north, followin' that river there, the north branch of the Flathead, and so over the line; then we turn and jam right through the range. Two hours from now you'll be back in the old U. S."

Dockbridge had started to his feet and was staring intently at the map. It was only too true. They were in Canada. *In Canada!* And they were holding their prisoner without due process of law! The warrant of the Governors of New York and Washington were valueless in his Majesty's Dominion. Did Andrews know? Jack pretended to study the map before him and glanced furtively across the table. Pat was scowling ferociously at the cards before him, and Andrews was lighting a cigarette. Apparently he had heard nothing —or had paid no attention to what the conductor was saying. With his brain in a whirl Dockbridge folded up the time-table and handed it back.

"Well, I'm getting ravenous," he remarked.

Just then the porter appeared from the direction of the buffet car carrying their evening meal.

"Same here," echoed Andrews.

For an hour or more they lingered over the table, Andrews seeming in unusually good spirits. Dockbridge ceased to feel any uneasiness. He realized how easily he might have been trapped, but no harm was done in the present instance, for the minute section of Alberta which they traversed offered no opportunities for the securing of any legal process by which their prisoner could be released. Again, Andrews had not urged the route upon them; that had been Peggy's doing. And, moreover, was he not returning with them of his own free will? No, it was absurd to have been so upset at such a trifling matter.

"What do you say to some more whist? You and I'll be partners this time, Andrews."

The things were cleared from the table and they began again. The speed

of the train seemed to have increased, and the cars swayed from side to side as they sped down the grade. Peggy raised the shade and looked out. The pane was plastered with an ever-changing, kaleidoscopic crust of flakes that spat against it, dropped, clogged against the others, and sagged downward in a dense mass toward the sash. At the top of the glass the storm could be seen whirling down its myriads outside.

"What a night!" she ejaculated, as she pulled down the shade.

At that moment came a prolonged wail from the engine, followed by the quick clutch of the brakes. The wheels groaned and creaked, and the passengers tossed forward in their seats. Again the whistle shrieked. The train, carried onward by its momentum, ground its wheels against the brakes which strove to hold them back. Gradually they came to a stand-still.

The conductor rushed toward the door, and a brakeman hurried through with a lantern.

"Ferguson's Gulch!" he shouted as he ran by. "Must ha' signalled us!"

Dockbridge's heart dropped a beat, and he glanced apprehensively toward Andrews. The latter was smiling, but the hand that held his cigar trembled a very little.

"You're young yet, Dockbridge," he remarked, with slightly tremulous sarcasm. "There are one or two things still for you to learn. One of them is that a United States warrant is useless in Canada. You hadn't thought of that, eh?"

"*Warrant* is it? Shure this is all the warrant *I* want," replied Pat, snapping a shining Colt from his pocket. "Plaze don't git excited, me frind. P'r'aps ye don't know it all, yerself. Wan move, an' I'll put six holes in yer carcus!"

Dockbridge grasped Peggy by the arm and drew her breathless to her feet. "What is it? What is it?" she gasped, clinging to him in the aisle. Jack reached over and released the shade. Outside in the darkness red lights swung to and fro. A blast of icy air poured into the car from the open door. He hurried out into the vestibule. The storm was sweeping by swiftly and silently, and absurdly the motto of his old bicycle club flashed into his mind, "Volociter et silenter." The lamp above his head threw a yellow circle against the vast night. He stumbled down the steps and clung to the rail, putting his head into the sleet. It stung his face like the tentacles of a sea-monster. In the foreground stood the conductor, already white with the snow, his lantern swinging to leeward in the wind, shouting to a man on horseback. Four other mounted figures, their steeds facing the blast, marked the point where the light ended and the night began again. Three train hands, each with a lantern, paced to and fro beside the car. Ahead could be heard the coughing of the engine. The man on horseback waved his hand in the direction of the train, flung himself heavily to the ground, tossed the reins to one of the others, and strode toward the car.

"Jones and Wilkes, hold the horses; Frazer and White, come along with me," he directed over his shoulder. He pushed by Dockbridge and climbed into the car. The conductor followed.

"Where is the officer and his prisoner?" he demanded in a harsh voice.

"Inside, your Honor," answered the conductor, shaking the snow from his coat. "This is Mr. Dockbridge, the District Attorney from New York."

"Umph!" grunted the stranger. He was an immense man with a heavy jet-black beard and hair in thick curls all over his head. A broad-brimmed sombrero cast a deep shadow over his features, heightening their natural unpleasantness. Two of the others now jumped upon the platform and entered the car, and Dockbridge saw that they wore some kind of uniform and that the lining of their overcoats was red. Peggy cowered to one side as the three strangers forced their way by her and paused at the door of the compartment.

"Is Mr. Andrews here?" inquired the one whom the others addressed as Judge.

"I am Mr. Andrews. This is the officer who holds me in custody."

"Serve him!" he growled.

The one addressed took from beneath his coat a bundle of papers, and selecting one, handed it to McGinnis, who let it fall to the floor without a word.

"Put up that pistol!" continued the Judge.

At this moment Dockbridge, who had listened as if dazed to the colloquy, now mastered sufficient courage to assert himself.

"Here! what's all this?" he exclaimed in as determined a manner as he could manage to assume. "What are you doing in my compartment with your wet feet? Who the devil are you, anyway?" He squeezed by his huge antagonist and took his stand by McGinnis.

The conductor and the majority of the train hands had crowded into the passageway and filled the door with their dripping and astonished faces. The officer handed another paper to Dockbridge.

"This is Judge Peters, sir; and this paper is a writ of *habeas corpus* returnable forthwith, sir," said the man.

Dockbridge glanced at the paper and saw that the officer's statement was correct. The paper was a writ ordering him to produce the body of Samuel Andrews before the Honorable Elijah Peters, Judge of the Supreme Court of Alberta, *forthwith,* and show cause why said Andrews should not be set at liberty. He was trapped. It could not be denied.

"Is this Judge Peters?" he inquired politely of the man with the black beard, who had taken off his hat and seated himself upon the sofa.

"I am," returned the other curtly. "And I now pronounce this car a court, and direct you to release your prisoner as detained by you without lawful authority."

He leaned forward and shook his finger threateningly at McGinnis. "Put up that pistol!"

McGinnis looked at Dockbridge.

"Put it up, Pat," directed the latter. "There's no occasion for pistols." He winked at Peggy. "Pardon my lack of courtesy in addressing you, Judge Peters, when you first entered. I was unaware, of course, to whom it was that I spoke."

The Judge shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly.

"I'm naturally taken somewhat by surprise, and hardly feel that I can do justice to my own position in the matter at such short notice. However, as the court is now in session, I can only ask the privilege of arguing the matter

before your Honor. If I might be permitted to do so, I would suggest that the hearing take place in some larger space than this compartment, in which my wife desires speedily to retire." He looked inquiringly toward the Court.

"That's right, Jedge," spoke up the conductor. "Don't keep the lady out of her room. You can hold court in the baggage-car."

The black-bearded man grumblingly arose to his feet, leaving a large pool of water in the middle of the floor.

"As you choose. Bring along the prisoner, and be quick about it. I've got to ride fifteen miles to-night."

The crowd streamed down the aisle and into the baggage-car in front. McGinnis followed with Andrews.

"Shall I come along, Jack?" whispered his wife.

"No, stay here. I'm afraid we're beaten. I shall only spar for time, and try to invent some way out of it."

Peggy sadly watched his disappearing form. What a disgusting anticlimax! She reviled herself for being the one who had forced the selection of the Montana route. It was all her fault. When a man's married his troubles begin! Jack would lose his job, and then where would they be? She had gotten him into the fix, and now she would do her best to get him out of it. She threw on his fur coat and cap and followed into the baggage-car. The Judge had seated himself on a trunk. Jack stood at his right with the warrant in his hand. A single lantern cast a fitful glare over the two, around whom crowded the passengers and train hands. Peggy heard her husband's somewhat immature voice stating the circumstances of the wreck of the Boodle Bank. The Judge seemed not uninterested. The crowd was getting larger every moment. Passengers kept coming in in every kind of dishabille, and last of all the engineer and fireman entered by the forward door. Outside, the huge engine hissed and throbbed as if impatient of the delay. Peggy slipped unseen behind a pile of trunks, snapped the big padlock through the staples of the door, then, hurrying back to the compartment, rummaged until she found Jack's box of cigars. Arming herself with these and with her copy of "Moore on Extradition," she made her way back to the baggage-car.

"Yes, yes, I know all that!" the Judge was saying. "But that's all immaterial. It ain't what he did. It's what right you've got to hold him in the Dominion of Canada on a warrant from a governor of one of the United States. Show me that, or I'll discharge the prisoner here and now."

"Excuse me, please," exclaimed Peggy, forcing her way through the throng into the open space under the lamp, "I thought you might like to smoke. Lawyers all like to smoke."

There was an immediate response from the Court.

"Well, I don't care if I do," remarked the Judge more genially. "Confounded cold out there in the snow waiting for the train. Thank y'."

He handed back the box, and Peggy passed it to the engineer and told him to "send it along." Then she whispered in her husband's ear:

"Read him that chapter on 'International Relations.' Keep it going for ten

minutes, and we'll win out, yet. I've got a scheme."

Dockbridge took the book, opened it deliberately, and lighted a cigar for himself. Peggy pushed back through the spectators to the sleeping-car. Only a solitary brakeman remained outside in the snow, stamping and swinging his arms.

"Halloo, Mr. Sanders," said Peggy, "you ought to go in and hear the argument. They're having a regular smoke talk. It's so thick I can't breathe. They're giving away cigars. I should think you would freeze."

"Well, I'm froze already," answered Sanders. "I reckon I'll go in and hear the fun. Is that straight about the cigars?"

"Of course it is," laughed Peggy, while Sanders climbed on board. The snow swept by in clouds as Peggy gave one glance at the retreating form of the brakeman, and jumped down into the night.

CHAPTER IV

THE Judge threw back his burly form against the side of the car and exhaled a thick cloud of smoke.

"Now, young feller, if you have any legal right to detain your prisoner, let's hear it. This court's goin' to adjourn in just ten minutes by the watch, and I reckon when it adjourns it'll take the prisoner with it."

The spectators, who had seated themselves as best they could, looked expectantly toward the New Yorker.

Jack arose, holding the book impressively before him. The gusts from the storm outside penetrated the cracks of the loosely hung sliding baggage-door and made the feeble lantern swing and flicker. The smoke from twenty cigars swirled round the ceiling. The conductor placed his own lantern on a trunk by Jack's side.

"If the Court please," began Dockbridge, "while it's entirely true that no warrant issued out of a court of the United States or by a governor of one of the United States gives any jurisdiction over the person of a fugitive who is held in custody in the Dominion of Canada, it is nevertheless a fact that under the principle of comity between friendly nations the government of one will not interfere with an officer of another who is performing an official act under color of authority." ("Sounds well," said Jack to himself, "but don't mean a blame thing.") "This principle is as old as the law itself, and is sustained by a long series of decisions in our international tribunals. The doctrine is clearly set forth by Grotius" ("that ought to nail him!") "when he says: 'No nation will voluntarily interfere with a duly authorized officer of another nation in the performance of his duty, whose act does not interfere with the functions of government of the other.'" He pronounced this balderdash with much solemnity and with great effect upon the assembled train hands. "Now, your Honor, I am a duly authorized officer of the State of New York, the same being at peace with the Dominion of Canada."

"Bosh!" interrupted the Judge. "You're talkin' nonsense. I won't be made a fool of any longer. Prisoner discharged. This court stands ad-

journed, and, as I said, it is goin' to take the prisoner with——"

A jerk of the train prevented the conclusion of his sentence. There came another pull from the engine, followed by a succession of violent puffs. The train started.

"My God! The engine!" shouted the fireman, making a spring for the door.

"Locked! Locked!" he yelled, and threw himself upon it. The conductor dived for the platform. The Judge started to his feet.

"This is an infernal trick!" he cried. "Stop this train! D'ye hear? Stop this train at once!"

But the train was gathering head-way every moment, and was fast dropping down the grade. A triumphant whistle shrilled through the night with a succession of short toots.

"For God's sake, open the door!" gasped the engineer. "Get a crow-bar, somebody! We'll be going a hundred miles an hour inside of a minute!" But no crow-bar was to be found, and the door resisted all their efforts. On rushed the train, thundering down the pass, swaying around curves until the frightened occupants of the baggage-car clung to one another to retain their foothold, and every moment adding to its speed. The baggage-man threw open the side door. The night dashed by in a solid wall of white.

"Damme! This is a crime!" roared the Judge. "I'm being kidnapped. Your government shall be notified—if we're not all killed. Can't somebody stop this train? Do you hear? Stop it, I say!"

For an instant Dockbridge had been as startled as the others. Then it came to him in one inspired moment. Peggy was on the engine! A series of whistles came across the tender.

"Toot — toot — toot! Toot — toot— toot! Toot—toot—toot! Toot—toot!" —the old Harvard cheer that Peggy had heard echoing across the football field a hundred times.

Of course! She was going to fetch them out of Canada, and then to thunder with all the judges of the Dominion! He began to laugh hysterically. On and on, faster and faster, rushed the train. The pallid faces of the passengers and crew stared strangely out of the blue haze. Breathless, each man struggled to keep his footing, momentarily expecting to be dashed into eternity. The minutes dragged as hours, until at last, from somewhere in the rear of the train, the fireman returned with a wrench, and throwing his whole weight upon the padlock, quickly snapped its staples. The door burst open, sending him flying headlong. Through the car poured a furious gust of wind and snow, blinding, suffocating, and into the midst of this jumped the engineer, and, clambering desperately upon the tender, disappeared.

Perhaps it was the dimness of the light, but Andrews had suddenly begun to look white and old.

At the same moment a red light flashed by alongside the track and the train roared across a suspension bridge without slackening speed.

"Red River!" gasped the fireman, clambering to his feet.

The blood leaped in Jack's veins. Red River! Then they were across the line. Peggy had won! God bless her! With

a triumphant glance at the cowering Andrews, he turned upon the frightened crowd.

"You can't beat the Yankee girl!" he shouted. "Judge, you're right. We've adjourned court, and are taking the prisoner with us—INTO THE UNITED STATES!"

Zadig

THE BLIND OF ONE EYE

THERE lived at Babylon, in the reign of King Moabdar, a young man named Zadig, of a good natural disposition, strengthened and improved by education. Though rich and young, he had learned to moderate his passions; he had nothing stiff or affected in his behavior, he did not pretend to examine every action by the strict rules of reason, but was always ready to make proper allowances for the weakness of mankind.

It was matter of surprise that, notwithstanding his sprightly wit, he never exposed by his raillery those vague, incoherent, and noisy discourses, those rash censures, ignorant decisions, coarse jests, and all that empty jingle of words which at Babylon went by the name of conversation. He had learned, in the first book of Zoroaster, that self love is a football swelled with wind, from which, when pierced, the most terrible tempests issue forth.

Above all, Zadig never boasted of his conquests among the women, nor affected to entertain a contemptible opinion of the fair sex. He was generous, and was never afraid of obliging the ungrateful; remembering the grand precept of Zoroaster, "When thou eatest, give to the dogs, should they even bite thee." He was as wise as it is possible for man to be, for he sought to live with the wise.

Instructed in the sciences of the ancient Chaldeans, he understood the principles of natural philosophy, such as they were then supposed to be; and knew as much of metaphysics as hath ever been known in any age, that is, little or nothing at all. He was firmly persuaded, notwithstanding the new philosophy of the times, that the year consisted of three hundred and sixty-five days and six hours, and that the sun was in the center of the world. But when the principal magi told him, with a haughty and contemptuous air, that his sentiments were of a dangerous tendency, and that it was to be an enemy to the state to believe that the sun revolved on its own axis, and that the year had twelve months, he held his tongue with great modesty and meekness.

Possessed as he was of great riches, and consequently of many friends, blessed with a good constitution, a handsome figure, a mind just and moderate,

and a heart noble and sincere, he fondly imagined that he might easily be happy. He was going to be married to Semira, who, in point of beauty, birth, and fortune, was the first match in Babylon. He had a real and virtuous affection for this lady, and she loved him with the most passionate fondness.

The happy moment was almost arrived that was to unite them forever in the bands of wedlock, when happening to take a walk together toward one of the gates of Babylon, under the palm trees that adorn the banks of the Euphrates, they saw some men approaching, armed with sabers and arrows. These were the attendants of young Orcan, the minister's nephew, whom his uncle's creatures had flattered into an opinion that he might do everything with impunity. He had none of the graces nor virtues of Zadig; but thinking himself a much more accomplished man, he was enraged to find that the other was preferred before him. This jealousy, which was merely the effect of his vanity, made him imagine that he was desperately in love with Semira; and accordingly he resolved to carry her off. The ravishers seized her; in the violence of the outrage they wounded her, and made the blood flow from her person, the sight of which would have softened the tigers of Mount Imaus. She pierced the heavens with her complaints. She cried out, "My dear husband! they tear me from the man I adore." Regardless of her own danger, she was only concerned for the fate of her dear Zadig, who, in the meantime, defended himself with all the strength that courage and love could inspire. Assisted only by two slaves, he put the ravishers to flight and carried home Semira, insensible and bloody as she was.

On opening her eyes and beholding her deliverer. "O Zadig!" said she, "I loved thee formerly as my intended husband; I now love thee as the preserver of my honor and my life." Never was heart more deeply affected than that of Semira. Never did a more charming mouth express more moving sentiments, in those glowing words inspired by a sense of the greatest of all favors, and by the most tender transports of a lawful passion.

Her wound was slight and was soon cured. Zadig was more dangerously wounded; an arrow had pierced him near his eye, and penetrated to a considerable depth. Semira wearied Heaven with her prayers for the recovery of her lover. Her eyes were constantly bathed in tears; she anxiously awaited the happy moment when those of Zadig should be able to meet hers; but an abscess growing on the wounded eye gave everything to fear. A messenger was immediately dispatched to Memphis for the great physician Hermes, who came with a numerous retinue. He visited the patient and declared that he would lose his eye. He even foretold the day and hour when this fatal event would happen. "Had it been the right eye," said he, "I could easily have cured it; but the wounds of the left eye are incurable." All Babylon lamented the fate of Zadig, and admired the profound knowledge of Hermes.

In two days the abscess broke of its own accord and Zadig was perfectly cured. Hermes wrote a book to prove that it ought not to have been cured.

Zadig did not read it; but, as soon as he was able to go abroad, he went to pay a visit to her in whom all his hopes of happiness were centered, and for whose sake alone he wished to have eyes. Semira had been in the country for three days past. He learned on the road that that fine lady, having openly declared that she had an unconquerable aversion to one-eyed men, had the night before given her hand to Orcan. At this news he fell speechless to the ground. His sorrow brought him almost to the brink of the grave. He was long indisposed; but reason at last got the better of his affliction, and the severity of his fate served to console him.

"Since," said he, "I have suffered so much from the cruel caprice of a woman educated at court, I must now think of marrying the daughter of a citizen." He pitched upon Azora, a lady of the greatest prudence, and of the best family in town. He married her and lived with her for three months in all the delights of the most tender union. He only observed that she had a little levity; and was too apt to find that those young men who had the most handsome persons were likewise possessed of most wit and virtue.

THE NOSE

One morning Azora returned from a walk in a terrible passion, and uttering the most violent exclamations. "What aileth thee," said he, "my dear spouse? What is it that can thus have discomposed thee?"

"Alas," said she, "thou wouldst be as much enraged as I am hadst thou seen what I have just beheld. I have been to comfort the young widow Cosrou, who, within these two days, hath raised a tomb to her young husband, near the rivulet that washes the skirts of this meadow. She vowed to heaven, in the bitterness of her grief, to remain at this tomb while the water of the rivulet should continue to run near it."—"Well," said Zadig, "she is an excellent woman, and loved her husband with the most sincere affection."

"Ah," replied Azora, "didst thou but know in what she was employed when I went to wait upon her!"

"In what, pray, beautiful Azora? Was she turning the course of the rivulet?"

Azora broke out into such long invectives and loaded the young widow with such bitter reproaches, that Zadig was far from being pleased with this ostentation of virtue.

Zadig had a friend named Cador, one of those young men in whom his wife discovered more probity and merit than in others. He made him his confidant, and secured his fidelity as much as possible by a considerable present. Azora, having passed two days with a friend in the country, returned home on the third. The servants told her, with tears in their eyes, that her husband died suddenly the night before; that they were afraid to send her an account of this mournful event; and that they had just been depositing his corpse in the tomb of his ancestors, at the end of the garden. She wept, she tore her hair, and swore she would follow him to the grave.

In the evening Cador begged leave to wait upon her, and joined his tears with hers. Next day they wept less, and dined together. Cador told her

that his friend had left him the greatest part of his estate; and that he should think himself extremely happy in sharing his fortune with her. The lady wept, fell into a passion, and at last became more mild and gentle. They sat longer at supper than at dinner. They now talked with greater confidence. Azora praised the deceased; but owned that he had many failings from which Cador was free.

During supper Cador complained of a violent pain in his side. The lady, greatly concerned, and eager to serve him, caused all kinds of essences to be brought, with which she anointed him, to try if some of them might not possibly ease him of his pain. She lamented that the great Hermes was not still in Babylon. She even condescended to touch the side in which Cador felt such exquisite pain.

"Art thou subject to this cruel disorder?" said she to him with a compassionate air.

"It sometimes brings me," replied Cador, "to the brink of the grave; and there is but one remedy that can give me relief, and that is to apply to my side the nose of a man who is lately dead."

"A strange remedy, indeed!" said Azora.

"Not more strange," replied he, "than the sachels of Arnon against the apoplexy." This reason, added to the great merit of the young man, at last determined the lady.

"After all," says she, "when my husband shall cross the bridge Tchinavar, in his journey to the other world, the angel Asrael will not refuse him a passage because his nose is a little shorter in the second life than it was in the first." She then took a razor, went to her husband's tomb, bedewed it with her tears, and drew near to cut off the nose of Zadig, whom she found extended at full length in the tomb. Zadig arose, holding his nose with one hand, and putting back the razor with the other, "Madam," said he, "don't exclaim so violently against young Cosrou; the project of cutting off my nose is equal to that of turning the course of a rivulet."

THE DOG AND THE HORSE

Zadig found by experience that the first month of marriage, as it is written in the book of Zend, is the moon of honey, and that the second is the moon of wormwood. He was some time after obliged to repudiate Azora, who became too difficult to be pleased; and he then sought for happiness in the study of nature. "No man," said he, "can be happier than a philosopher who reads in this great book which God hath placed before our eyes. The truths he discovers are his own; he nourishes and exalts his soul; he lives in peace; he fears nothing from men; and his tender spouse will not come to cut off his nose."

Possessed of these ideas he retired to a country house on the banks of the Euphrates. There he did not employ himself in calculating how many inches of water flow in a second of time under the arches of a bridge, or whether there fell a cube line of rain in the month of the Mouse more than in the month of the Sheep. He never dreamed of making silk of cobwebs, or porcelain of broken bottles; but he chiefly studied the properties of plants and animals;

and soon acquired a sagacity that made him discover a thousand differences where other men see nothing but uniformity.

One day, as he was walking near a little wood, he saw one of the queen's eunuchs running toward him, followed by several officers, who appeared to be in great perplexity, and who ran to and fro like men distracted, eagerly searching for something they had lost of great value. "Young man," said the first eunuch, "hast thou seen the queen's dog?" "It is a female," replied Zadig. "Thou art in the right," returned the first eunuch. "It is a very small she spaniel," added Zadig; "she has lately whelped; she limps on the left forefoot, and has very long ears." "Thou hast seen her," said the first eunuch, quite out of breath. "No," replied Zadig, "I have not seen her, nor did I so much as know that the queen had a dog."

Exactly at the same time, by one of the common freaks of fortune, the finest horse in the king's stable had escaped from the jockey in the plains of Babylon. The principal huntsman and all the other officers ran after him with as much eagerness and anxiety as the first eunuch had done after the spaniel. The principal huntsman addressed himself to Zadig, and asked him if he had not seen the king's horse passing by. "He is the fleetest horse in the king's stable," replied Zadig; "he is five feet high, with very small hoofs, and a tail three feet and a half in length; the studs on his bit are gold of twenty-three carats, and his shoes are silver of eleven pennyweights." "What way did he take? Where is he?" demanded the chief huntsman. "I have not seen him," replied Zadig, "and never heard talk of him before."

The principal huntsman and the first eunuch never doubted but that Zadig had stolen the king's horse and the queen's spaniel. They therefore had him conducted before the assembly of the grand desterham, who condemned him to the knout, and to spend the rest of his days in Siberia. Hardly was the sentence passed when the horse and the spaniel were both found. The judges were reduced to the disagreeable necessity of reversing their sentence; but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having said that he had not seen what he had seen. This fine he was obliged to pay; after which he was permitted to plead his cause before the counsel of the grand desterham, when he spoke to the following effect:

"Ye stars of justice, abyss of sciences, mirrors of truth, who have the weight of lead, the hardness of iron, the splendor of the diamond, and many properties of gold: Since I am permitted to speak before this august assembly, I swear to you by Oramades that I have never seen the queen's respectable spaniel, nor the sacred horse of the king of kings. The truth of the matter was as follows: I was walking toward the little wood, where I afterwards met the venerable eunuch, and the most illustrious chief-huntsman. I observed on the sand the traces of an animal, and could easily perceive them to be those of a little dog. The light and long furrows impressed on little eminences of sand between the marks of the paws plainly discovered that it was a female, whose dugs were hanging

down, and that therefore she must have whelped a few days before. Other traces of a different kind, that always appeared to have gently brushed the surface of the sand near the marks of the forefeet, showed me that she had very long ears; and as I remarked that there was always a slighter impression made on the sand by one foot than the other three, I found that the spaniel of our august queen was a little lame, if I may be allowed the expression.

"With regard to the horse of the king of kings, you will be pleased to know that, walking in the lanes of this wood, I observed the marks of a horse's shoes, all at equal distances. This must be a horse, said I to myself, that gallops excellently. The dust on the trees in the road that was but seven feet wide was a little brushed off, at a distance of three feet and a half from the middle of the road. This horse, said I, has a tail three feet and a half long, which being whisked to the right and left, has swept away the dust. I observed under the trees that formed an arbor five feet in height, that the leaves of the branches were newly fallen; from whence I inferred that the horse had touched them, and that he must therefore be five feet high. As to his bit, it must be gold of twenty-three carats, for he had rubbed its bosses against a stone which I knew to be a touchstone, and which I have tried. In a word, from the marks made by his shoes on flints of another kind, I concluded that he was shod with silver eleven deniers fine."

All the judges admired Zadig for his acute and profound discernment. The news of this speech was carried even to the king and queen. Nothing was talked of but Zadig in the antechambers, the chambers, and the cabinet; and though many of the magi were of opinion that he ought to be burned as a sorcerer, the king ordered his officers to restore him the four hundred ounces of gold which he had been obliged to pay. The register, the attorneys, and bailiffs went to his house with great formality, to carry him back his four hundred ounces. They only retained three hundred and ninety-eight of them to defray the expenses of justice; and their servants demanded their fees.

Zadig saw how extremely dangerous it sometimes is to appear too knowing, and therefore resolved that on the next occasion of the like nature he would not tell what he had seen.

Such an opportunity soon offered. A prisoner of state made his escape, and passed under the window of Zadig's house. Zadig was examined and made no answer. But it was proved that he had looked at the prisoner from this window. For this crime he was condemned to pay five hundred ounces of gold; and, according to the polite custom of Babylon, he thanked his judges for their indulgence.

"Great God!" said he to himself, "what a misfortune it is to walk in a wood through which the queen's spaniel or the king's horse has passed! how dangerous to look out of a window! and how difficult to be happy in this life!"

D'Artagnan, Detective

KING LOUIS XIV was in a quandary. He had heard of a wounded courtier but had no real knowledge of the affair that caused it. In this extremity, he thought of his versatile captain of the musketeers.

"Call M. d'Artagnan." The guard obeyed, and the musketeer entered the chamber of Louis XIV.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the king, "you will leave this place by the little door of the private staircase."

"Yes, sire."

"You will mount your horse."

"Yes, sire."

"And you will proceed to the Rond-point du Bois-Rochin. Do you know the spot?"

"Yes, sire. I have fought there twice."

"What!" exclaimed the king, amazed at the reply.

"Under the edicts, sire, of Cardinal Richelieu," returned D'Artagnan, with his usual impassibility.

"That is very different, monsieur. You will, therefore, go there, and will examine the locality very carefully. A man has been wounded there, and you will find a horse lying dead. You will tell me what your opinion is upon the whole affair."

"Very good, sire."

"As a matter of course, it is your own opinion I require, and not that of any one else."

"You shall have it in an hour's time, sire."

"I prohibit your speaking with any one, whoever it may be."

"Except with the person who must give me a lantern," said D'Artagnan.

"Oh, that is a matter of course," said the king, laughing at the liberty, which he tolerated in no one but his captain of musketeers. D'Artagnan left by the little staircase.

Without losing a second he ran to the stable, took down the lantern, saddled his horse himself, and proceeded towards the place his majesty had indictated. According to the promise he had made, he had not accosted any one; and, as we have observed, he had carried his scruples so far as to do without the assistance of the stable-helpers altogether. D'Artagnan was one of those who in moments of difficulty pride themselves on increasing their own value. By dint of hard galloping, he in less than five minutes reached the wood, fastened his horse to the first tree he came to, and penetrated to the broad open space on foot. He then began to inspect most carefully, on foot and with his lantern in his hand, the whole surface of the Rond-point, went forward, turned back again, measured, examined, and after half an hour's minute inspection, he returned silently to where he had left his horse, and pursued his way in deep reflection and at a foot-pace to Fontaine-bleau. Louis was waiting in his cabinet; he was alone, and with a pencil was scribbling on paper certain lines which D'Artagnan

at the first glance recognised as unequal and very much touched up. The conclusion he arrived at was, that they must be verses. The king raised his head and perceived D'Artagnan. "Well, monsieur," he said, "do you bring me any news?"

"Yes, sire."

"What have you seen?"

"As far as probability goes, sire," D'Artagnan began to reply.

"It was certainty I requested of you."

"I will approach it as near as I possibly can. The weather was very well adapted for investigations of the character I have just made; it has been raining this evening, and the roads were wet and muddy——"

"Well, the result, M. d'Artagnan?"

"Sire, your majesty told me that there was a horse lying dead in the cross-road of the Bois-Rochin, and I began, therefore, by studying the roads. I say the roads, because the center of the cross-road is reached by four separate roads. The one that I myself took was the only one that presented any fresh traces. Two horses had followed it side by side; their eight feet were marked very distinctly in the clay. One of the riders was more impatient than the other, for the footprints of the one were invariably in advance of the other about half a horse's length."

"Are you quite sure they were traveling together?" said the king.

"Yes, sire. The horses were two rather large animals of equal pace,—horses well used to maneuvers of all kinds, for they wheeled round the barrier of the Rond-point together."

"Well—and after?"

"The two cavaliers paused there for a minute, no doubt to arrange the conditions of the engagement; the horses grew restless and impatient. One of the riders spoke, while the other listened and seemed to have contented himself by simply answering. His horse pawed the ground, which proves that his attention was so taken up by listening that he let the bridle fall from his hand."

"A hostile meeting did take place then?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Continue; you are a very accurate observer."

"One of the two cavaliers remained where he was standing, the one, in fact, who had been listening; the other crossed the open space, and at first placed himself directly opposite to his adversary. The one who had remained stationary traversed the Rond-point at a gallop, about two-thirds of its length, thinking that by this means he would gain upon his opponent; but the latter had followed the circumference of the wood."

"You are ignorant of their names, I suppose."

"Completely so, sire. Only he who followed the circumference of the wood was mounted on a black horse."

"How do you know that?"

"I found a few hairs of his tail among the brambles which bordered the sides of the ditch."

"Go on."

"As for the other horse, there can be no trouble in describing him, since he was left dead on the field of battle."

"What was the cause of his death?"

"A ball which had passed through his brain."

"Was the ball that of a pistol or a gun?"

"It was a pistol-bullet, sire. Besides, the manner in which the horse was wounded explained to me the tactics of the man who had killed it. He had followed the circumference of the wood in order to take his adversary in flank. Moreover, I followed his foot-tracks on the grass."

"The tracks of the black horse, do you mean?"

"Yes, sire."

"Go on, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"As your majesty now perceives the position of the two adversaries, I will, for a moment, leave the cavalier who had remained stationary for the one who started off at a gallop."

"Do so."

"The horse of the cavalier who rode at full speed was killed on the spot."

"How do you know that?"

"The cavalier had not time even to throw himself off his horse, and so fell with it. I observed the impression of his leg, which, with a great effort, he was enabled to extricate from under the horse. The spur, pressed down by the weight of the animal, had plowed up the ground."

"Very good; and what did he do as soon as he rose up again?"

"He walked straight up to his adversary."

"Who still remained upon the verge of the forest?"

"Yes, sire. Then, having reached a favorable distance, he stopped firmly, for the impression of both his heels are left in the ground quite close to each other, fired, and missed his adversary."

"How do you know he did not hit him?"

"I found a hat with a ball through it."

"Ah, a proof, then!" exclaimed the king.

"Insufficient, sire," replied D'Artagnan, coldly; "it is a hat without any letters indicating its ownership, without arms; a red feather, as all hats have; the lace, even, had nothing particular in it."

"Did the man with the hat through which the bullet had passed fire a second time?"

"Oh, sire, he had already fired twice."

"How did you ascertain that?"

"I found the waddings of the pistol."

"And what became of the bullet which did not kill the horse?"

"It cut in two the feather of the hat belonging to him against whom it was directed, and broke a small birch at the other end of the open glade."

"In that case, then, the man on the black horse was disarmed, whilst his adversary had still one more shot to fire?"

"Sire, while the dismounted rider was extricating himself from his horse, the other was reloading his pistol. Only, he was much agitated while he was loading it, and his hand trembled greatly."

"How do you know that?"

"Half the charge fell to the ground, and he threw the ramrod aside, not having time to replace it in the pistol."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan, this is marvelous you tell me."

"It is only close observation, sire, and the commonest highwayman could tell as much."

"The whole scene is before me from the manner in which you relate it."

"I have, in fact, reconstructed it in my own mind, with merely a few alterations."

"And now," said the king, "let us return to the dismounted cavalier. You

were saying that he walked towards his adversary while the latter was loading his pistol."

"Yes; but at the very moment he himself was taking aim, the other fired."

"Oh!" said the king; "and the shot?"

"The shot told terribly, sire; the dismounted cavalier fell upon his face, after having staggered forward three or four paces."

"Where was he hit?"

"In two places; in the first place, in his right hand, and then, by the same bullet, in his chest."

"But how could you ascertain that?" inquired the king, full of admiration.

"By a very simple means; the butt end of the pistol was covered with blood, and the trace of the bullet could be observed, with fragments of a broken ring. The wounded man, in all probability, had the ring-finger and the little finger carried off."

"As far as the hand goes, I have nothing to say; but the chest?"

"Sire, there were two small pools of blood, at a distance of about two feet and a half from each other. At one of these pools of blood the grass was torn up by the clenched hand; at the other, the grass was simply pressed down by the weight of the body."

"Poor De Guiche!" exclaimed the king.

"Ah! it was M. de Guiche, then?" said the musketeer, quietly. "I suspected it, but did not venture to mention it to your majesty."

"And what made you suspect it?"

"I recognised the De Grammont arms upon the holsters of the dead horse."

"And you think he is seriously wounded?"

"Very seriously; since he fell immediately, and remained a long time in the same place; however, he was able to walk, as he left the spot, supported by two friends."

"You met him returning, then?"

"No; but I observed the footprints of three men; the one on the right and the one on the left walked freely and easily, but the one in the middle dragged his feet as he walked; besides, he left traces of blood at every step he took."

"Now, monsieur, since you saw the combat so distinctly that not a single detail seems to have escaped you, tell me something about De Guiche's adversary."

"Oh, sire, I do not know him."

"And yet you see everything very clearly."

"Yes, sire, I see everything; but I do not tell all I see; and, since the poor devil has escaped, your majesty will permit me to say that I do not intend to denounce him."

"And yet he is guilty, since he has fought a duel, monsieur."

"Not guilty in my eyes, sire," said D'Artagnan, coldly.

"Monsieur!" exclaimed the king, "are you aware of what you are saying?"

"Perfectly, sire; but, according to my notions, a man who fights a duel is a brave man; such, at least, is my own opinion; but your majesty may have another, it is but natural, for you are master here."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan, I ordered you, however——"

D'Artagnan interrupted the king by a respectful gesture. "You ordered me, sire, to gather what particulars I could, respecting a hostile meeting that had taken place; those particulars you have. If you order me to arrest M. de

Guiche's adversary, I will do so; but do not order me to denounce him to you, for in that case I will not obey."

"Very well! Arrest him, then."

"Give me his name, sire."

The king stamped his foot angrily; but after a moment's reflection, he said, "You are right—ten times, twenty times, a hundred times right."

"That is my opinion, sire: I am happy that, this time, it accords with your majesty's."

"One word more. Who assisted Guiche?"

"I do not know, sire."

"But you speak of two men. There was a person present, then, as second."

"There was no second, sire. Nay, more than that, when M. de Guiche fell, his adversary fled without giving him any assistance."

"The miserable coward!" exclaimed the king.

"The consequence of your ordinances, sire. If a man has fought well, and fairly, and has already escaped one chance of death, he naturally wishes to escape a second. M. de Botteville cannot be forgotten very easily."

"And so, men turn cowards."

"No, they become prudent."

"And he has fled, then, you say?"

"Yes; and as fast as his horse could possibly carry him."

"In what direction?"

"In the direction of the chateau."

"Well, and after all that?"

"Afterwards, as I have had the honor of telling your majesty, two men on foot arrived, who carried M. de Guiche back with them."

"What proof have you that these men arrived after the combat?"

"A very evident proof, sire; at the moment the encounter took place, the rain had just ceased, the ground had not had time to imbibe the moisture, and was, consequently, soaked; the footsteps sank in the ground; but while M. de Guiche was lying there in a fainting condition, the ground became firm again, and the footsteps made a less sensible impression."

Louis clapped his hands together in sign of admiration. "Monsieur d'Artagnan," he said, "you are positively the cleverest man in my kingdom."

"The identical thing M. de Richelieu thought, and M. de Mazarin said, sire."

"And now, it remains for us to see if your sagacity is at fault."

"Oh, sire, a man may be mistaken; *humanum est errare,*" said the musketeer, philosophically.

"In that case, you are not human, Monsieur d'Artagnan, for I believe you never are mistaken."

The Tragedies in the Greek Room

CHAPTER I

WHEN did Moris Klaw first appear in London? It is a question which I am asked sometimes and to which I reply, "To the best of my knowledge, shortly before the commencement of the strange happenings at the Menzies Museum."

What I know of him I have gathered from various sources; and in these papers, which represent an attempt to justify the methods of one frequently accused of being an insane theorist, I propose to recount all the facts which have come to my knowledge. In some few of the cases I was personally though slightly concerned; but regard me merely as the historian and on no account as the principal or even minor character in the story. My friendship with Martin Coram led, then, to my first meeting with Moris Klaw—a meeting which resulted in my becoming his biographer, inadequate though my information unfortunately remains.

It was some three months after the appointment of Coram to the curatorship of the Menzies Museum that the first of a series of singular occurrences took place there.

This occurrence befell one night in August, and the matter was brought to my ears by Coram himself on the following morning. I had, in fact, just taken my seat at the breakfast table, when he walked in unexpectedly and sank into an armchair. His dark, clean-shaven face looked more gaunt than usual and I saw, as he lighted the cigarette which I proffered, that his hand shook nervously.

"There's trouble at the Museum!" he said, abruptly. "I want you to run around."

I looked at him for a moment without replying, and, knowing the responsibility of his position, feared that he referred to a theft from the collection.

"Something gone?" I asked.

"No; worse!" was his reply.

"What do you mean, Coram?"

He threw the cigarette, unsmoked, into the hearth. "You know Conway?" he said; "Conway, the night attendant? Well—he's dead!"

I stood up from the table, my breakfast forgotten, and stared incredulously. "Do you mean that he died in the night?" I inquired.

"Yes. Done for, poor devil!"

"What! murdered?"

"Without a doubt, Searles! He's had his neck broken!"

I waited for no further explanations, but hastily dressing, accompanied Coram to the Museum. It consists, I should mention, of four long, rectangular rooms, the windows of two overlooking South Grafton Square, those of the third giving upon the court that leads to the curator's private entrance, and the fourth adjoining an enclosed garden attached to the building. This

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fourth room is on the ground floor and is entered through the hall from the Square, the other three, containing the principal and more valuable exhibits, are upon the first floor and are reached by a flight of stairs from the hall. The remainder of the building is occupied by an office and the curator's private apartments, and is completely shut off from that portion open to the public, the only communicating door—an iron one—being kept locked.

The room described in the catalogue as the "Greek Room" proved to be the scene of the tragedy. This room is one of the two overlooking the Square and contains some of the finest items of the collection. The Museum is not open to the public until ten o'clock, and I found, upon arriving there, that the only occupants of the Greek Room were the commissionaire on duty, two constables, a plain-clothes officer and an inspector—that is if I except the body of poor Conway.

He had not been touched but lay as he was found by Beale, the commissionaire who took charge of the upper rooms during the day, and, indeed, it was patent that he was beyond medical aid. In fact, the position of his body was so extraordinary as almost to defy description.

There are three windows in the Greek Room, with wall cases between, and, in the gap corresponding to the east window and just by the door opening into the next room, is a chair for the attendant. Conway lay downward on the polished floor with his limbs partly under this chair and his clenched fists thrust straight out before him. His head, turned partially to one side, was doubled underneath his breast in a most dreadful manner, indisputably pointing to a broken neck, and his commissionaire's cap lay some distance away, under a table supporting a heavy case of vases.

So much was revealed at a glance, and I immediately turned blankly to Coram.

"What do you make of it?" he said.

I shook my head in silence. I could scarce grasp the reality of the thing; indeed, I was still staring at the huddled figure when the doctor arrived. At his request we laid the dead man flat upon the floor to facilitate an examination, and we then saw that he was greatly cut and bruised about the head and face, and that his features were distorted in a most extraordinary manner, almost as though he had been suffocated.

The doctor did not fail to notice this expression. "Made a hard fight of it!" he said. "He must have been in the last stages of exhaustion when his neck was broken!"

"My dear fellow!" cried Coram, somewhat irritably, "what do you mean when you say that he made a hard fight? There could not possibly have been any one else in these rooms last night!"

"Excuse me, sir!" said the inspector, "but there certainly was something going on here. Have you seen the glass case in the next room?"

"Glass case?" muttered Coram, running his hand distractedly through his thick black hair. "No; what of a glass case?"

"In here, sir," explained the inspec-

tor, leading the way into the adjoining apartment.

At his words, we all followed, and found that he referred to the glass front of a wall case containing statuettes and images of Egyptian deities. The centre pane of this was smashed into fragments, the broken glass strewing the floor and the shelves inside the case.

"That looks like a struggle, sir, doesn't it?" said the inspector.

"Heaven help us! What does it mean?" groaned poor Coram. "Who could possibly have gained access to the building in the night, or, having done so, quitted it again, when all the doors remained locked?"

"That we must try and find out!" replied the inspector. "Meanwhile, here are his keys. They lay on the floor in a corner of the Greek Room."

Coram took them, mechanically. "Beale," he said to the comissionaire, "see if any of the cases are unlocked."

The man proceeded to go around the rooms. He had progressed no farther than the Greek Room when he made a discovery. "Here's the top of this unfastened, sir!" he suddenly cried, excitedly.

We hurriedly joined him, to find that he stood before a marble pedestal surmounted by a thick glass case containing what Coram had frequently assured me was the gem of the collection—the Athenean Harp.

It was alleged to be of very ancient Greek workmanship and was constructed of fine gold inlaid with jewels. It represented two reclining female figures their arms thrown above their heads, their hands meeting; and the strings several of which were still intact were of incredibly fine gold wire. The instrument was said to have belonged to a Temple of Pallas in an extremely remote age, and at the time it was brought to light much controversy had waged concerning its claims to authenticity, several connoisseurs proclaiming it the work of a famous goldsmith of mediæval Florence, and nothing but a clever forgery. However, Greek or Florentine, amazingly ancient or comparatively modern, it was a beautiful piece of workmanship and of very great intrinsic value, apart from its artistic worth and unique character.

"I thought so!" said the plain-clothes man. "A clever museum thief!"

Coram sighed wearily. "My good fellow," he replied, "can you explain, by any earthly hypothesis, how a man could get into these apartments and leave them again during the night?"

"Regarding that, sir," remarked the detective, "there are a few questions I should like to ask you. In the first place, at what time does the Museum close?"

"At six o'clock in the summer."

"What do you do when the last visitor has gone?"

"Having locked the outside door, Beale, here, thoroughly examines every room to make certain that no one remains concealed. He next locks the communicating doors and comes down into the hall. It was then his custom to hand me the keys. I gave them into poor Conway's keeping when he came on duty at half-past six, and every hour he went through the

Museum, relocking all the doors behind him."

"I understand that there is a tell-tale watch in each room?"

"Yes. That in the Greek Room registers 4 A. M., so that it was about then that he met his death He had evidently opened the door communicating with the next room—that containing the broken glass case, but he did not touch the detector and the door was found open this morning."

"Someone must have lain concealed there and sprung upon him as he entered."

"Impossible! There is no other means of entrance or exit. The three windows are iron-barred and they have not been tampered with. Moreover, the watch shows that he was there at three o'clock, and nothing larger than a mouse could find shelter in the place; there is nowhere a man could hide."

"Then the murderer followed him into the Greek Room."

"Might I venture to point out that, had he done so, he would have been there this morning when Beale arrived? The door of the Greek Room was locked and the keys were found inside upon the floor!"

"The thief might have had a duplicate set."

"Quite impossible; but, granting the impossible, how did he get in, since the hall door was bolted and barred?"

"We must assume that he succeeded in concealing himself before the Museum was closed."

"The assumption is not permissible, in view of the fact that Beale and I both examined the rooms last night prior to handing the keys to Conway. However, again granting the impossible, how did he get out?"

The Scotland Yard man removed his hat and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief. "I must say, sir, it is a very strange thing," he said; "but how about the iron door here?"

"It leads to my own apartments. I, alone, hold a key. It was locked."

A brief examination served to show that exit from any of the barred windows was impossible.

"Well, sir," said the detective, "if the man had keys he could have come down into the hall and the lower room."

"Step down and look," was Coram's invitation.

The windows of the room on the ground floor were also heavily protected, and it was easy to see that none of them had been opened.

"Upon my word," exclaimed the inspector, "it's uncanny! He couldn't have gone out by the hall door, because you say it was bolted and barred on the inside."

"It was," replied Coram.

"One moment, sir," interrupted the plain-clothes man. "If that was so, how did you get in this morning?"

"It was Beale's custom," said Coram, "to come around by the private entrance to my apartments. We then entered the Museum together by the iron door into the Greek Room and relieved Conway of the keys. There are several little matters to be attended to in the morning before admitting the public, and the other door is never unlocked before ten o'clock."

"Did you lock the door behind you

when you came through this morning?"

"Immediately on finding poor Conway."

"Could any one have come through this door in the night, provided he had a duplicate key?"

"No. There is a bolt on the private side."

"And you were in your rooms all last night?"

"From twelve o'clock, yes."

The police looked at one another silently; then the inspector gave an embarrassed laugh. "Frankly sir," he said, "I'm completely puzzled!"

We passed upstairs again and Coram turned to the doctor. "Anything else to report about poor Conway?" he asked.

"His face is all cut by the broken glass and he seems to have had a desperate struggle, although, curiously enough, his body bears no other marks of violence. The direct cause of death was of course a broken neck."

"And how should you think he came by it?"

"I should say that he was hurled upon the floor by an opponent possessing more than ordinary strength!"

Thus the physician, and was about to depart when there came a knocking upon the iron door.

"It is Hilda," said Coram, slipping the key in the lock—"my daughter," he added, turning to the detective.

CHAPTER II

The heavy door swinging open, there entered Hilda Coram, a slim, classical figure, with the regular features of her father and the pale gold hair of her dead mother. She looked unwell, and stared about her apprehensively.

"Good morning, Mr. Searles," she greeted me. "Is it not dreadful about poor Conway!"—and then glanced at Coram. I saw that she held a card in her hand. "Father, there is such a singular old man asking to see you."

She handed the card to Coram, who in turn passed it to me. It was that of Douglas Glade of the *Daily Cable*, and had written upon it in Glade's hand the words, "To introduce Mr. Moris Klaw."

"I suppose it is all right if Mr. Glade vouches for him," said Coram. "But does anybody here know Moris Klaw?"

"I do" replied the Scotland Yard man, smiling shortly. "He's an antique dealer or something of the kind; got a ramshackle old place by Wapping Old Stairs—sort of a cross between Jamrach's and a rag shop. He's lately been hanging about the Central Criminal Court a lot. Seems to fancy his luck as an amateur investigator. He's certainly smart," he added, grudgingly, "but cranky."

"Ask Mr. Klaw to come through, Hilda," said Coam.

Shortly afterward entered a strange figure. It was that of a tall man who stooped so that his apparent height was diminished—a very old man who carried his many years lightly, or a younger man prematurely aged; none could say which. His skin had the hue of dirty vellum and his hair, his shaggy brows, his scanty beard were so toneless as to defy classification in terms of colour. He wore an archaic

brown bowler, smart, gold-rimmed pince-nez, and a black silk muffler. A long, caped black cloak completely enveloped the stooping figure; from beneath its mud-spattered edge peeped long-toed continental boots.

He removed his hat.

"Good morning, Mr. Coram," he said. His voice reminded me of the distant rumbling of empty casks; his accent was wholly indescribable. "Good morning" (to the detective), "Mr. Grimsby. Good morning, Mr. Searles. Your friend, Mr. Glade tells me I shall find you here. Good morning, Inspector. To Miss Coram I already have said good morning."

From the lining of the flat-topped hat he took out one of those small cylindrical scent sprays and played its contents upon his high, bald brow. An odour of verbena filled the air. He replaced the spray in the hat, the hat upon his scantily thatched crown.

"There is here a smell of dead men!" he explained.

I turned aside to hide my smiles, so grotesque was my first impression of the amazing individual known as Moris Klaw.

"Mr. Coram," he continued, "I am an old fool who sometimes has wise dreams Crime has been the hobby of a busy life. I have seen crime upon the Gold Coast, where the black fever it danced in the air above the murdered one like a lingering soul, and I have seen blood flow in Arctic Lapland, where it was frozen up into red ice almost before it left the veins. Have I your permit to see if I can help?"

All of us, the police included, were strangely impressed now.

"Certainly," said Coram; "will you step this way?"

Moris Klaw bent over the dead man.

"You have moved him!" he said sharply.

It was explained that this had been for the purpose of a medical examination. He nodded absently. With the aid of a large magnifying glass he was scrutinizing poor Conway. He examined his hair, his hands, his fingernails. He rubbed long, flexible fingers upon the floor beside the body—and sniffed at the dust.

"Someone so kindly will tell me all about it," he said, turning out the dead man's pockets.

Coram briefly recounted much of the foregoing, and replied to the oddly chosen questions which from time to time Moris Klaw put to him. Throughout the duologue, the singular old man conducted a detailed search of every square inch, I think, of the Greek Room. Before the case containing the harp he stood, peering.

"It is here that the trouble centres," he muttered. "What do I know of such a Grecian instrument? Let me think"

He threw back his head, closing his eyes.

"Such valuable curios," he rumbled, "have histories—and the crimes they occasion operate in cycles." He waved his hand in a slow circle. "If I but knew the history of this harp! Mr. Coram!"

He glanced toward my friend.

"Thoughts are things Mr. Coram. If I might spend a night here—upon the very spot of floor where the poor

Conway fell—I could from the surrounding atmosphere (it is a sensitive plate) recover a picture of the thing in his mind"—indicating Conway—"at the last!"

The Scotland Yard man blew down his nose.

"You snort, my friend," said Moris Klaw, turning upon him. "You would snort less if you had waked screaming, out in the desert; screaming out with fear of the dripping beaks of the vultures—the last dreadful fear which the mind had known of him who had died of thirst upon that haunted spot!"

The words and the manner of their delivery thrilled us all.

"What is it," continued the weird old man, "but the odic force, the ether—say it how you please—which carries the wireless message, the lightning? It is a huge, subtile, sensitive plate. Inspiration, what you call bad luck and good luck—all are but reflections from it. The supreme thought preceding death is imprinted on the surrounding atmosphere like a photograph. I have trained this"—he tapped his brow—"to reproduce those photographs! May I sleep here to-night, Mr. Coram?"

Somewhere beneath the ramshackle exterior we had caught a glimpse of a man of power. From behind the thick pebbles momentarily had shone out the light of a tremendous and original mind.

"I should be most glad of your assistance," answered my friend.

"No police must be here to-night," rumbled Moris Klaw. "No heavy-footed constables, filling the room with thoughts of large cooks and small Basses, must fog my negative!"

"Can that be arranged?" asked Coram of the inspector.

"The men on duty can remain in the hall, if you wish it, sir."

"Good!" rumbled Moris Klaw.

He moistened his brow with verbena, bowed uncouthly, and shuffled from the Greek Room.

CHAPTER III

Moris Klaw reappeared in the evening, accompanied by a strikingly beautiful brunette.

The change of face upon the part of Mr. Grimsby of New Scotland Yard was singular.

"My daughter—Isis," explained Moris Klaw. "She assists to develop my negatives."

Grimsby became all attention. Leaving two men on duty in the hall, Moris Klaw, his daughter, Grimsby, Coram and I went up to the Greek Room. Its darkness was relieved by a single lamp.

"I've had the stones in the Athenean Harp examined by a lapidary," said Coram. "It occurred to me that they might have been removed and paste substituted. It was not so, however."

"No," rumbled Klaw. "I thought of that, too. No visitors have been admitted here during the day?"

"The Greek Room has been closed."

"It is well, Mr. Coram. Let no one disturb me until my daughter comes in the morning."

Isis Klaw placed a red silk cushion upon the spot where the dead man had lain.

"Some pillows and a blanket, Mr. Klaw?" suggested the suddenly attentive Mr. Grimsby.

"I thank you, no," was the reply. "They would be saturated with alien impressions. My cushion it is odically sterilized! The 'etheric storm' created by Conway's last mental emotion reaches my brain unpolluted. Good-night, gentlemen. Good-night, Isis!"

We withdrew, leaving Moris Klaw to his ghostly vigil.

"I suppose Mr. Klaw is quite trustworthy?" whispered Coram to the detective.

"Oh, undoubtedly!" was the reply. "In any case, he can do no harm. My men will be on duty downstairs here all night."

"Do you speak of my father, Mr. Grimsby?" came a soft, thrilling voice.

Grimsby turned, and met the flashing black eyes of Isis Klaw.

"I was assuring Mr. Coram," he answered, readily, "that Mr. Klaw's methods have several times proved successful!"

"Several times!" she cried, scornfully. "What! has he ever failed?"

Her accent was certainly French, I determined; her voice, her entire person, as certainly charming—to which the detective's manner bore witness.

"I'm afraid I'm not familiar with all his cases, miss," he said. "Can I call you a cab?"

"I thank you, no." She rewarded him with a dazzling smile. "Good-night."

Coram opened the doors of the Museum, and she passed out. Leaving the men on duty in the hall, Coram and I shortly afterward also quitted the Museum by the main entrance, in order to avoid disturbing Moris Klaw by using the curator's private door.

To my friend's study Hilda Coram brought us coffee. She was unnaturally pale, and her eyes were feverishly bright. I concluded that the tragedy was responsible.

"Perhaps, to an extent" said Coram; "but she is studying music and, I fear, overworking in order to pass a stiff exam."

Coram and I surveyed the Greek Room problem from every conceivable standpoint, but were unable to surmise how the thief had entered, how left, and why he had fled without his booty.

"I don't mind confessing," said Coram "that I am very ill at ease. We haven't the remotest idea how the murderer got into the Greek Room or how he got out again. Bolts and bars, it is evident, do not prevail against him, so that we may expect a repetition of the dreadful business at any time!"

"What precautions do you propose to take?"

"Well, there will be a couple of police on duty in the Museum for the next week or so, but, after that, we shall have to rely upon a night watchman. The funds only allow of the appointment of four attendants: three for day and one for night duty."

"Do you think you'll find any difficulty in getting a man?"

"No," replied Coram. "I know of a steady man who will come as soon as we are ready for him."

I slept but little that night, and was early afoot and around to the Museum. Isis Klaw was there before me, car-

rying the red cushion, and her father was deep in conversation with Coram.

Detective-Inspector Grimsby approached me.

"I see you're looking at the cushion, sir!" he said, smilingly. "But it's not a 'plant.' He's not an up-to-date cracksman. Nothing's missing!"

"You need not assure me of that," I replied. "I do not doubt Mr. Klaw's honesty of purpose."

"Wait till you hear his mad theory, though!" he said, with a glance aside at the girl.

"Mr. Coram," Moris Klaw was saying, in his odd, rumbling tones, "my psychic photograph is of a woman! A woman dressed all in white!"

Grimsby coughed—then flushed as he caught the eye of Isis.

"Poor Conway's mind," continued Klaw, "is filled with such a picture when he breathes his last—great wonder he has for the white woman and great fear for the Athenean Harp, which she carries!"

"Which she carries!" cried Coram.

"Some woman took the harp from its case a few minutes before Conway died!" affirmed Moris Klaw. "I have much research to make now, and with aid from Isis shall develop my negative! Yesterday I learnt from the constable who was on night duty at the corner of the Square that a heavy pantechnicon van went driving round at four o'clock. It was shortly after four o'clock that the tragedy occurred. The driver was unaware that there was no way out, you understand. Is it important? I cannot say. It often is such points that matter. We must, however, waste no time. Until you hear from me again you will lay dry plaster of Paris all around the stand of the Athenean Harp each night. Good morning, gentlemen!"

His arm linked in his daughter's, he left the Museum.

CHAPTER IV

For some weeks after this mysterious affair, all went well at the Menzies Museum. The new night watchman, a big Scot, by name John Macalister, seemed to have fallen thoroughly into his duties, and everything was proceeding smoothly. No clue concerning the previous outrage had come to light, the police being clearly at a loss. From Moris Klaw we heard not a word. But Macalister did not appear to suffer from nervousness, saying that he was quite big enough to look after himself.

Poor Macalister! His bulk did not save him from a dreadful fate. He was found, one fine morning, lying flat on his back in the Greek Room—*dead!*

As in the case of Conway, the place showed unmistakable signs of a furious struggle. The attendant's chair had been dashed upon the floor with such violence as to break three of the legs; a bust of Pallas, that had occupied a corner position upon a marble pedestal was found to be hurled down; and the top of the case which usually contained the Athenean Harp had been unlocked, and the priceless antique lay close by, upon the floor!

The cause of death, in Macalister's case, was heart failure, an unsuspected weakness of that organ being brought

to light at the inquest; but, according to the medical testimony, deceased must have undergone unnaturally violent exertions to bring about death. In other respects, the circumstances of the two cases were almost identical. The door of the Greek Room was locked upon the inside and the keys were found on the floor. From the detector watches in the other rooms it was evident that his death must have taken place about three o'clock. Nothing was missing, and the jewels in the harp had not been tampered with.

But, most amazing circumstance of all, imprinted upon the dry plaster of Paris which in accordance with the instructions of the mysteriously absent Moris Klaw, had nightly been placed around the case containing the harp *were the marks of little bare feet!*

A message sent, through the willing agency of Inspector Grimsby, to the Wapping abode of the old curio dealer, resulted in the discovery that Moris Klaw was abroad. His daughter, however, reported having received a letter from her father which contained the words—

"Let Mr. Coram keep the key of the case containing the Athenean Harp under his pillow at night."

"What does she mean?" asked Coram. "That I am to detach that particular key from the bunch or place them all beneath my pillow?"

Grimsby shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm simply telling you what she told me, sir."

"I should suspect the man to be an impostor," said Coram, "if it were not for the extraordinary confirmation of his theory furnished by the footprints. They certainly looked like those of a woman!"

Remembering how Moris Klaw had acted, I sought out the constable who had been on duty at the corner of South Grafton Square on the night of the second tragedy. From him I elicited a fact which, though insignificant in itself, was, when associated with another circumstance, certainly singular.

A Pickford traction engine, drawing two heavy wagons, had been driven round the Square at 3 A. M., the driver thinking that he could get out on the other side.

That was practically all I learned from the constable, but it served to set me thinking. Was it merely a coincidence that, at almost the exact hour of the previous tragedy, a heavy pantechnicon had passed the Museum?

"It's not once in six months," the man assured me, "that any vehicle but a tradesman's cart goes round the Square. You see, it doesn't lead anywhere, but this Pickford chap he was rattling by before I could stop him, and though I shouted he couldn't hear me, the engine making such a noise, so I just let him drive round and find out for himself."

I now come to the event which concluded this extraordinary case, and, that it may be clearly understood, I must explain the positions which we took up during the nights of the following week; for Coram had asked me to take a night watch, with himself, Grimsby, and Beale, in the Museum.

Beale, the commissionaire, remained in the hall and lower room—it was catalogued as the "Bronze Room"—

Coram patrolled the room at the top of the stairs, Grimsby the next, or Greek Room, and I the Egyptian Room. None of the doors was locked, and Grimsby, by his own special request, held the keys of the cases in the Greek Room.

We commenced our vigil on the Saturday, and I, for one, found it a lugubrious business. One electrc lamp was usually left burning in each apartment throughout the night, and I sat as near to that in the Egyptian Room as possible and endeavoured to distract my thoughts with a bundle of papers with which I had provided myself.

In the next room I could hear Grimsby walking about incessantly, and, at regular intervals, the scratching of a match as he lighted a cigar. He was an inveterate cheroot smoker.

Our first night's watching then, was productive of no result, and the five that followed were equally monotonous.

Upon Grimsby's suggestion we observed great secrecy in the matter of these dispositions. Even Coram's small household was kept in ignorance of this midnight watching. Grimsby, following out some theory of his own, now determined to dispense altogether with light in the Greek Room. Friday was intensely hot, and occasional fitful breezes brought with them banks of black thundercloud, which, however, did not break; and, up to the time that we assumed our posts at the Museum, no rain had fallen. At about twelve o'clock I looked out into South Grafton Square and saw that the sky was entirely obscured by a heavy mass of inky cloud, ominous of a gathering storm.

Returning to my chair beneath the electric lamp, I took up a work of Mark Twain's, which I had brought as a likely antidote to melancholy or nervousness. As I commenced to read, for the twentieth time, "The Jumping Frog," I heard the scratch of Grimsby's match in the next room and knew that he had lighted his fifth cigar.

It must have been about one o'clock when the rain came. I heard the big drops on the glass roof, followed by the steady pouring of the deluge. For perhaps five minutes it rained steadily, and then ceased as abruptly as it had begun. Above the noise of the water rushing down the metal gutters, I distinctly detected the sound of Grimsby striking another match. Then, with a mighty crash, came the thunder.

Directly above the Museum it seemed as though the very heavens had burst, and the glass roof rattled as if a shower of stones had fallen, the thunderous report echoing and reverberating hollowly through the building.

As the lightning flashed with dazzling brilliance, I started from my chair and stood, breathless, with every sense on the alert; for, strangely intermingling with the patter of the rain that now commenced to fall again came a low wailing, like nothing so much as the voice of a patient succumbing to an anæsthetic. There was something indefinably sweet, but indescribably weird, in the low and mysterious music.

Not knowing from whence it proceeded, I stood undetermined what to

do; but, just as the thunder boomed again, I heard a wild cry—undoubtedly proceeding from the Greek Room! Springing to the door, I threw it open.

All was in darkness, but, as I entered, a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the place.

I saw a sight which I can never forget. Grimsby lay flat upon the floor by the farther door. But, dreadful as that spectacle was, it scarce engaged my attention; nor did I waste a second glance upon the Athenean Harp, which lay close beside its empty case.

For the figure of a woman, draped in flimsy white, was passing across the Greek Room!

Grim fear took me by the throat, since I could not doubt that what I saw was a supernatural manifestation. Darkness followed. I heard a loud wailing cry and a sound as of a fall.

Then Coram came running through the Greek Room.

Trembling violently, I joined him; and together we stood looking down at Grimsby.

"Good God!" whispered Coram; "this is awful. It cannot be the work of mortal hands! Poor Grimsby is dead!"

"Did you—see—the woman?" I muttered. I will confess it: my courage had completely deserted me.

He shook his head; but, as Beale came running to join us, glanced fearfully into the shadows of the Greek Room. The storm seemed to have passed, and, as we three frightened men stood around Grimsby's recumbent body we could almost hear the beating of each other's hearts.

Suddenly, giving a great start, Coram clutched my arm. "Listen!" he said. "What's that?"

I held my breath and listened. "It's the thunder in the distance," said Beale.

"You are wrong," I answered. "It is someone knocking at the hall entrance! There goes the bell, now!"

Coram gave a sigh of relief. "Heavens!" he said; "I've no nerves left! Come on and see who it is."

The three of us, keeping very close together, passed quickly through the Greek Room and down into the hall. As the ringing continued, Coram unbolted the door—and there, on the steps, stood Moris Klaw!

Some vague idea of his mission flashed through my mind. "You are too late!" I cried. "Grimsby has gone!"

I saw a look of something like anger pass over his large pale features, and then he had darted past us and vanished up the stairs.

CHAPTER V

HAVING rebolted the door, we rejoined Moris Klaw in the Greek Room. He was kneeling beside Grimsby in the dim light—and Grimsby, his face ghastly pale, was sitting up and drinking from a flask!

"I am in time!" said Moris Klaw. "He has only fainted!"

"It was the ghost!" whispered the Scotland Yard man. "My God! I'm prepared for anything human—but when the lightning came and I saw that white thing—playing the harp——"

Coram turned aside and was about

to pick up the harp, which lay upon the floor near, when—

"Ah!" cried Moris Klaw, "do not touch it! It is death!"

Coram started back as though he had been stung as Grimsby very unsteadily got upon his feet.

"Turn up lights," directed Moris Klaw, "and I will show you!"

The curator went out to the switchboard and the Greek Room became brightly illuminated. The ramshackle figure of Moris Klaw seemed to be invested with triumphant majesty. Behind the pebbles his eyes gleamed.

"Observe," he said, "I raise the harp from the floor." He did so. "And I live. For why? Because I do not take hold upon it in a natural manner—*by the top!* I take it by the side! Conway and Macalister took hold upon it at the top; and where are they—Conway and Macalister?"

"Mr. Klaw," said Coram, "I cannot doubt that this black business is all clear to your very unusual intelligence; but to me it is a profound mystery. I have, myself, in the past, taken up the harp in the way you describe as fatal, and without injury——"

"But not immediately after it had been played upon!" interrupted Moris Klaw.

"Played upon! I have never attempted to play upon it!"

"Even had you done so you might yet have escaped, provided you *set it down* before touching the top part! Note, please!"

He ran his long white fingers over the golden strings. Instantly there stole upon my ears that weird, wailing music which had heralded the strange happenings of the night!

"And now," continued our mentor, "whilst I who am cunning hold it where the ladies' gold feet join, observe the top—where the hand would in ordinary rest in holding it."

We gathered around him.

"A *needle-point,*" he rumbled, impressively, "protruding! The player touches it not! But who takes it from the hand of the player *dies!* By placing the harp again upon its base the point again retires! Shall I say what is upon that point, to drive a man mad like a dog with rabies, to stay potent for generations? I can not. It is a secret buried with the ugly body of Cæsar Borgia!"

"Cæsar Borgia!" we cried in chorus.

"Ah!" rumbled Moris Klaw, "your Athenean Harp was indeed made by Paduano Zelloni, the Florentine! It is a clever forge! I have been in Rome until yesterday. You are surprised? I am sorry, for the poor Macalister died. Having perfected, with the aid of Isis, my mind photograph of the lady who plays the harp, I go to Rome to perfect the story of the harp. For why? At my house I have records, but incomplete, useless. In Rome I have a friend, of so old a family, and once so wicked, I shall not name it!

"He has recourse to the great Vatican Library—to the annals of his race. There he finds me an account of such a harp. In those priceless parchments it is called 'a Greek lyre of gold.' It is described. I am convinced. I am sure!

"Once the beautiful Lucrece Borgia

play upon this harp. To one who is distasteful to her she says: 'Replace for me my harp.' He does so. He is a dead man! God! what cleverness!

"Where has it lain for generations before your Sir Menzies find it? No man knows. But it has still its virtues! How did the poor Menzies die? Throw himself from his room window, I recently learn. This harp certainly was in his room. Conway, after dashing, mad, about the place, springs head downward from the attendant's chair. Macalister dies in exhaustion and convulsions!"

A silence; when—

"What caused the harp to play?" asked Coram.

Moris Klaw looked hard at him. Then a thrill of new horror ran through my veins. A low moan came from somewhere hard by! Coram turned in a flash!

"Why, my private door is open!" he whispered.

"Where do you keep your private keys?" rumbled Klaw.

"In my study." Coram was staring at the open door but seemed afraid to approach it. "We have been using the attendant's keys at night. My own are on my study mantelpiece now."

"I think not," continued the thick voice. "Your daughter has them!"

"My daughter!" cried Coram and sprang to the open door. "Heavens! Hilda! Hilda!"

"She is somnambulistic!" whispered Moris Klaw in my ear. "When certain unusual sounds—such as heavy vehicles at night—reach her in her sleep (ah! how little we know of the phenomenon of sleep!), she arises, and, in common with many sleepwalkers, always acts the same. Something, in the case of Miss Hilda, attracts her to the golden harp——"

"She is studying music!"

"She must rest from it. Her brain is overwrought! She unlocks the case and strikes the cords of the harp, relocking the door, replacing the keys —I before have known such cases— then retires as she came. Who takes the harp from her hands, or raises it, if she has laid it down upon its side, dies! These dead attendants were brave fellows both, for, hearing the music, they came running, saw how the matter was, and did not waken the sleeping player. Conway was poisoned as he returned the harp to its case; Macalister, as he took it up from where it lay. Something to-night awoke her ere she could relock the door. The fright of so awaking made her to swoon."

Coram's kindly voice and the sound of a girl sobbing affrightedly reached us.

"It was my yell of fear, Mr. Klaw!" said Grimsby, shamefully. "She looked like a ghost!"

"I understand," rumbled Moris Klaw, soothingly. "As I see her in my sleep she is very awesome! I will show you the picture Isis has made from my etheric photograph. I saw it, finished, earlier to-night. It confirmed me that the Miss Hilda with the harp in her hand was poor Conway's last thought in life!"

"Mr. Klaw," said Grimsby, earnestly, "you are a very remarkable man!"

"Yes?" he rumbled, and gingerly placed in its case the "Greek lyre of gold" which Paduano Zelloni had wrought for Cæsar Borgia.

From the brown hat he took out his scent spray and squirted verbena upon his heated forehead.

"That harp," he explained, "it smells of dead men!"

The Majesty of Justice

CHAPTER I

In every sentence pronounced by a judge in the name of the sovereign people dwells the whole majesty of justice. The august character of that justice was brought home to Jérôme Crainquebille, costermonger, when, accused of having insulted a policeman, he appeared in the police court. Having taken his place in the dock, he beheld in the imposing sombre hall magistrates, clerks, lawyers in their robes, the usher wearing his chains, *gendarmes*, and, behind a rail, the bare heads of the silent spectators. He, himself, occupied a raised seat, as if some sinister honour were conferred on the accused by his appearance before the magistrate. At the end of the hall, between two assessors, sat President Bourriche. The palm-leaves of an officer of the Academy decorated his breast. Over the tribune were a bust representing the Republic and a crucifix, as if to indicate that all laws divine and human were suspended over Crainquebille's head. Such symbols naturally inspired him with terror. Not being gifted with a philosophic mind, he did not inquire the meaning of the bust and the crucifix; he did not ask how far Jesus and the symbolical bust harmonized in the Law Courts. Nevertheless, here was matter for reflection; for, after all, pontifical teaching and canon law are in many points opposed to the constitution of the Republic and to the civil code. So far as we know the Decretals have not been abolished. To-day, as formerly, the Church of Christ teaches that only those powers are lawful to which it has given its sanction. Now the French Republic claims to be independent of pontifical power. Crainquebille might reasonably say:

"Gentlemen and magistrates, in so much as President Loubet has not been anointed, the Christ, whose image is suspended over your heads, repudiates you through the voice of councils and of Popes. Either he is here to remind you of the rights of the Church, which invalidate yours, or His presence has no rational signification."

Whereupon President Bourriche might reply:

"Prisoner Crainquebille, the kings of France have always quarrelled with the Pope. Guillaume de Nogaret was ex-

communicated, but for so trifling a reason he did not resign his office. The Christ of the tribune is not the Christ of Gregory VII or of Boniface VIII. He is, if you will, the Christ of the Gospels, who knew not one word of canon law, and had never heard of the holy Decretals."

Then Crainquebille might not without reason have answered:

"The Christ of the Gospels was an agitator. Moreover, he was the victim of a sentence, which for nineteen hundred years all Christian peoples have regarded as a grave judicial error. I defy you, Monsieur le Président, to condemn me in His name to so much as forty-eight hours' imprisonment."

But Crainquebille did not indulge in any considerations either historical, political or social. He was wrapped in amazement. All the ceremonial, with which he was surrounded, impressed him with a very lofty idea of justice. Filled with reverence, overcome with terror, he was ready to submit to his judges in the matter of his guilt. In his own conscience he was convinced of his innocence; but he felt how insignificant is the conscience of the costermonger in the face of the panoply of the law, and the ministers of public prosecution. Already his lawyer had half persuaded him that he was not innocent.

A summary and hasty examination had brought out the charges under which he laboured.

CHAPTER II

CRAINQUEBILLE'S MISADVENTURE

Up and down the town went Jerome Crainquebille, costermonger, pushing his barrow before him and crying: "Cabbages! Turnips! Carrots!" When he had leeks he cried: "Asparagus!" For leeks are the asparagus of the poor. Now it happened that on October 20, at noon, as he was going down the Rue Montmartre, there came out of her shop the shoemaker's wife, Madame Bayard. She went up to Crainquebille's barrow and scornfully taking up a bundle of leeks, she said:

"I don't think much of your leeks. What do you want a bundle?"

"Sevenpence halfpenny, mum, and the best in the market!"

"Sevenpence halfpenny for three wretched leeks?"

And disdainfully she cast the leeks back into the barrow.

Then it was that Constable 64 came and said to Crainquebille:

"Move on."

Moving on was what Crainquebille had been doing from morning till evening for fifty years. Such an order seemed right to him, and perfectly in accordance with the nature of things. Quite prepared to obey, he urged his customer to take what she wanted.

"You must give me time to choose," she retorted sharply.

Then she felt all the bundles of leeks over again. Finally, she selected the one she thought the best, and held it clasped to her bosom as saints in church pictures hold the palm of victory.

"I will give you sevenpence. That's quite enough; and I'll have to fetch it from the shop, for I haven't anything on me."

Still embracing the leeks, she went back into the shop, whither she had

been preceded by a customer, carrying a child.

Just at this moment Constable 64 said to Crainquebille for the second time:

"Move on."

"I'm waiting for my money," replied Crainquebille.

"And I'm not telling you to wait for your money; I'm telling you to move on," retorted the constable grimly.

Meanwhile, the shoemaker's wife in her shop was fitting blue slippers on to a child of eighteen months, whose mother was in a hurry. And the green heads of the leeks were lying on the counter.

For the half century that he had been pushing his barrow through the streets, Crainquebille had been learning respect for authority. But now his position was a peculiar one: he was torn asunder between what was his due and what was his duty. His was not a judicial mind. He failed to understand that the possession of an individual's right in no way exonerated him from the performance of a social duty. He attached too great importance to his claim to receive sevenpence, and too little to the duty of pushing his barrow and moving on, for ever moving on. He stood still.

For the third time Constable 64 quietly and calmly ordered him to move on. Unlike Inspector Mantauciel, whose habit it is to threaten constantly but never to take proceedings, Constable 64 is slow to threaten and quick to act. Such is his character. Though somewhat sly he is an excellent servant and loyal soldier. He is as brave as a lion and as gentle as a child. He knows naught save his official instructions.

"Don't you understand when I tell you to move on?"

To Crainquebille's mind his reason for standing still was too weighty for him not to consider it sufficient. Wherefore, artlessly and simply he explained it:

"Good Lord! Don't I tell you that I am waiting for my money."

Constable 64 merely replied:

"Do you want me to summons you? If you do you have only to say so."

At these words Crainquebille slowly shrugged his shoulders looked sadly at the constable, and then raised his eyes to heaven, as if he would say:

"I call God to witness! Am I a lawbreaker? Am I one to make light of the by-laws and ordinances which regulate my ambulatory calling? At five o'clock in the morning I was at the market. Since seven, pushing my barrow and wearing my hands to the bones, I have been crying: 'Cabbages! Turnips! Carrots!' I am turned sixty. I am worn out. And you ask me whether I have raised the black flag of rebellion. You are mocking me and your joking is cruel."

Either because he failed to notice the expression on Crainquebille's face, or because he considered it no excuse for disobedience, the constable inquired curtly and roughly whether he had been understood.

Now, just at that moment the block of traffic in the Rue Montemartre was at its worst. Carriages, drays, carts, omnibuses, trucks, jammed one against the other, seemed indissolubly welded together. From their quivering immobility proceeded shouts and oaths. Cabmen and butchers' boys grandiloquent

and drawling insulted one another from a distance, and omnibus conductors, regarding Crainquebille as the cause of the block, called him "a dirty leek."

Meanwhile, on the pavement the curious were crowding round to listen to the dispute. Then the constable, finding himself the centre of attention, began to think it time to display his authority:

"Very well," he said, taking a stumpy pencil and a greasy notebook from his pocket.

Crainquebille persisted in his idea, obedient to a force within. Besides, it was now impossible for him either to move on or to draw back. The wheel of his barrow was unfortunately caught in that of a milkman's cart.

Tearing his hair beneath his cap he cried:

"But don't I tell you I'm waiting for my money! Here's a fix! *Misère de misère! Bon sang de bon sang!*"

By these words, expressive rather of despair than of rebellion, Constable 64 considered he had been insulted. And, because to his mind all insults must necessarily take the consecrated, regular, traditional, liturgical, ritual form so to speak of *Mort aux vaches,* thus the offender's words were heard and understood by the constable.

"Ah! You said: *Mort aux vaches.* Very good. Come along."

Stupefied with amazement and distress, Crainquebille opened his great rheumy eyes and gazed at Constable 64. With a broken voice proceeding now from the top of his head and now from the heels of his boots, he cried, with his arms folded over his blue blouse:

"I said *'Mort aux vaches'?* I? . . . Oh!"

The tradesmen and errand boys hailed the arrest with laughter. It gratified the taste of all crowds for violent and ignoble spectacles. But there was one serious person who was pushing his way through the throng; he was a sad-looking old man, dressed in black, wearing a high hat; he went up to the constable and said to him in a low voice very gently and firmly:

"You are mistaken. This man did not insult you."

"Mind your own business," replied the policeman, but without threatening, for he was speaking to a man who was well dressed.

The old man insisted calmly and tenaciously. And the policeman ordered him to make his declaration to the Police Commissioner.

Meanwhile Crainquebille was explaining:

"Then I did say *'Mort aux vaches!'* Oh! . . ."

As he was thus giving vent to his astonishment, Madame Bayard, the shoemaker's wife, came to him with sevenpence in her hand. But Constable 64 already had him by the collar; so Madame Bayard, thinking that no debt could be due to a man who was being taken to the police-station, put her sevenpence into her apron pocket.

Then, suddenly beholding his barrow confiscated, his liberty lost, a gulf opening beneath him and the sky overcast, Crainquebille murmured:

"It can't be helped!"

Before the Commissioner, the old gentleman declared that he had been hindered on his way by the block in the

traffic, and so had witnessed the incident. He maintained that the policeman had not been insulted, and that he was labouring under a delusion. He gave his name and profession: Dr. David Matthieu, chief physician at the Ambroise-Paré Hospital, officer of the Legion of Honour. At another time such evidence would have been sufficient for the Commissioner. But just then men of science were regarded with suspicion in France.

Crainquebille continued under arrest. He passed the night in the lock-up. In the morning he was taken to the Police Court in the prison van.

He did not find prison either sad or humiliating. It seemed to him necessary. What struck him as he entered was the cleanliness of the walls and of the brick floor.

"Well, for a clean place, yes, it is a clean place. You might eat off the floor."

When he was left alone, he wanted to draw out his stool; but he perceived that it was fastened to the wall. He expressed his surprise aloud:

"That's a queer idea! Now there's a thing I should never have thought of, I'm sure."

Having sat down, he twiddled his thumbs and remained wrapped in amazement. The silence and the solitude overwhelmed him. The time seemed long. Anxiously he thought of his barrow, which had been confiscated with its load of cabbages, carrots, celery, dandelion and corn-salad. And he wondered, asking himself with alarm: "What have they done with my barrow?"

On the third day he received a visit from his lawyer, Maître Lemerle, one of the youngest members of the Paris Bar, President of a section of La Ligue de la Patrie Française.

Crainquebille endeavoured to tell him his story; but it was not easy, for he was not accustomed to conversation. With a little help he might perhaps have succeeded. But his lawyer shook his head doubtfully at everything he said; and, turning over his papers, muttered:

"Hm! Hm! I don't find anything about all this in my brief."

Then, in a bored tone, twirling his fair moustache he said:

"In your own interest it would be advisable, perhaps, for you to confess. Your persistence in absolute denial seems to me extremely unwise."

And from that moment Crainquebille would have made confession if he had known what to confess.

CHAPTER III

CRAINQUEBILLE BEFORE THE MAGISTRATES

PRESIDENT BOURRICHE devoted six whole minutes to the examination of Crainquebille. The examination would have been more enlightening if the accused had replied to the questions asked him. But Crainquebille was unaccustomed to discussion; and in such a company his lips were sealed by reverence and fear. So he was silent: and the President answered his own questions; his replies were staggering. He concluded: "Finally, you admit having said, *'Mort aux vaches'*."

"I said, *'Mort aux vaches!'* because the policeman said, *'Mort aux vaches!'* So then I said *'Mort aux vaches!'*"

He meant that, being overwhelmed by the most unexpected of accusations, he had in his amazement merely repeated the curious words falsely attributed to him, and which he had certainly never pronounced. He had said, *"Mort aux vaches!"* as he might have said, "I capable of insulting anyone! how could you believe it?"

President Bourriche put a different interpretation on the incident.

"Do you maintain," he said, "that the policeman was, himself, the first to utter the exclamation?"

Crainquebille gave up trying to explain. It was too difficult.

"You do not persist in your statement. You are quite right," said the President.

And he had the witness called.

Constable 64, by name Bastien Matra, swore he spoke the truth and nothing but the truth. Then he gave evidence in the following terms:

"I was on my beat on October 20, at noon, when I noticed in the Rue Montmartre a person who appeared to be a hawker, unduly blocking the traffic with his barrow opposite No. 328. Three times I intimated to him the order to move on, but he refused to comply. And when I gave him warning that I was about to charge him, he retorted by crying: *'Mort aux vaches!'* Which I took as an insult."

This evidence, delivered in a firm and moderate manner, the magistrates received with obvious approbation. The witnesses for the defence were Madame Bayard, shoemaker's wife, and Dr. David Matthieu, chief physician to the Hospital Ambroise-Paré, officer of the Legion of Honour. Madame Bayard had seen nothing and heard nothing. Dr. Matthieu was in the crowd which had gathered round the policeman, who was ordering the costermonger to move on. His evidence led to a new episode in the trial.

"I witnessed the incident," he said, "I observed that the constable had made a mistake; he had not been insulted. I went up to him and called his attention to the fact. The officer insisted on arresting the costermonger, and told me to follow him to the Commissioner of Police. This I did. Befor the Commissioner, I repeated my declaration."

"You may sit down," said the President. "Usher, recall witness Matra."

"Matra, when you proceeded to arrest the accused, did not Dr. Matthieu point out to you that you were mistaken?"

"That is to say, Monsieur le Président, that he insulted me."

"What did he say?"

"He said, *'Mort aux vaches!'* "

Uproarious laughter arose from the audience.

"You may withdraw," said the President hurriedly.

And he warned the public that if such unseemly demonstrations occurred again he would clear the court. Meanwhile, Counsel for the defence was haughtily fluttering the sleeves of his gown, and for the moment it was thought that Crainquebille would be acquitted.

Order having been restored, Maître Lemerle rose. He opened his pleading with a eulogy of policemen: "those unassuming servants of society who, in return for a trifling salary, endure fa-

tigue and brave incessant danger with daily heroism. They were soldiers once, and soldiers they remain; soldiers, that word expresses everything . . ."

From this consideration Maître Lemerle went on to descant eloquently on the military virtues. He was one of those, he said, who would not allow a finger to be laid on the army, on that national army, to which he was so proud to belong.

The President bowed. Maître Lemerle happened to be lieutenant in the Reserves. He was also nationalist candidate for Les Vielles Haudriettes. He continued:

"No, indeed, I do not esteem lightly the invaluable services unassumingly rendered, which the valiant people of Paris receive daily from the guardians of the peace. And had I beheld in Crainquebille, gentlemen, one who had insulted an ex-soldier, I should never have consented to represent him before you. My client is accused of having said: *"Mort aux vaches!'* The meaning of such an expression is clear. If you consult *Le Dictionnaire de la Langue* (slang) you will find: *'Vachard,* a sluggard, an idler, one who stretches himself out lazily like a cow instead of working. *Vache,* one who sells himself to the police; spy.' *Mort aux vaches* is an expression employed by certain people. But the question resolves itself into this: how did Crainquebille say it? And, further, did he say it at all. Permit me to doubt it, gentlemen.

"I do not suspect Constable Matra of any evil intention. But, as we have said, his calling is arduous. He is sometimes harassed, fatigued, overdone. In such conditions he may have suffered from an aural hallucination. And, when he comes and tells you, gentlemen, that Dr. David Matthieu, officer of the Legion of Honour, chief physician at the Ambroise-Paré Hospital, a gentleman and a prince of science, cried: *'Mort aux vaches,'* then we are forced to believe that Matra is obsessed, and if the term be not too strong, suffering from the mania of persecution.

"And even if Crainquebille did cry, *'Mort aux vaches,'* it remains to be proved whether such words on his lips can be regarded as an offense. Crainquebille is the natural child of a costermonger, depraved by years of drinking and other evil courses. Crainquebille was born alcoholic. You behold him brutalized by sixty years of poverty. Gentlemen, you must conclude that he is irresponsible."

Maître Lemerle sat down. Then President Bourriche muttered a sentence condemning Jerôme Crainquebille to pay fifty francs fine and to go to prison for a fortnight. The magistrates convicted him on the strength of the evidence given by Constable Matra.

As he was being taken down the long dark passage of the Palais, Crainquebille felt an intense desire for sympathy. He turned to the municipal guard who was his escort and called him three times:

"'Cipal! . . . 'cipal . . . Eh! 'cipal!" And he sighed:

"If anyone had told me only a fortnight ago that this would happen!"

Then he reflected:

"They speak too quickly, these gen-

tlemen. They speak well, but they speak too quickly. You can't make them understand you. . . . 'cipal, don't you think they speak too quickly?"

But the soldier marched straight on without replying or turning his head.

Crainquebille asked him:

"Why don't you answer me?"

The soldier was silent. And Crainquebille said bitterly:

"You would speak to a dog. Why not to me? Do you never open your mouth? Is it because your breath is foul?"

CHAPTER IV

AN APOLOGY FOR PRESIDENT BOURRICHE

After the sentence had been pronounced, several members of the audience and two or three lawyers left the hall. The clerk was already calling another case. Those who went out did not reflect on the Crainquebille affair, which had not greatly interested them; and they thought no more about it. Monsieur Jean Lermite, an etcher, who happened to be at the Palais, was the only one who meditated on what he had just seen and heard. Putting his arm on the shoulder of Maître Joseph Aubarée, he said:

"President Bourriche must be congratulated on having kept his mind free from idle curiosity, and from the intellectual pride which is determined to know everything. If he had weighed one against the other the contradictory evidence of Constable Matra and Dr. David Matthieu, the magistrate would have adopted a course leading to nothing but doubt and uncertainty. The method of examining facts in a critical spirit would be fatal to the administration of justice. If the judge were so imprudent as to follow that method, his sentences would depend on his personal sagacity, of which he has generally no very great store, and on human infirmity which is universal. Where can he find a criterion? It cannot be denied that the historical method is absolutely incapable of providing him with the certainty he needs. In this connexion you may recall a story told of Sir Walter Raleigh.

" 'One day, when Raleigh, a prisoner in the Tower of London, was working, as was his wont, at the second part of his 'History of the World,' there was a scuffle under his window. He went and looked at the brawlers; and when he returned to his work, he thought he had observed them very carefully. But on the morrow, having related the incident to one of his friends who had witnessed the affair and had even taken part in it, he was contradicted by his friend on every point. Reflecting, therefore, that if he were mistaken as to events which passed beneath his very eyes, how much greater must be the difficulty of ascertaining the truth concerning events far distant, he threw the manuscript of his history into the fire.'

"If the judges had the same scruples as Sir Walter Raleigh, they would throw all their notes into the fire. But they have no right to do so. They would thus be flouting justice; they would be committing a crime. We may despair of knowing, we must not despair of judging. Those who demand that sentences pronounced in Law Courts should be founded upon a methodical examination of facts, are dan-

gerous sophists, and perfidious enemies of justice both civil and military. President Bourriche has too judicial a mind to permit his sentences to depend on reason and knowledge, the conclusions of which are eternally open to question. He founds them on dogma and moulds them by tradition, so that the authority of his sentences is equal to that of the Church's commandments. His sentences are indeed canonical. I mean that he derives them from a certain number of sacred canons. See, for example, how he classifies evidence, not according to the uncertain and deceptive qualities of appearances and of human veracity, but according to intrinsic, permanent and manifest qualities. He weighs them in the scale, using weapons of war for weights. Can anything be at once simpler and wiser? Irrefutable for him is the evidence of a guardian of the peace, once his humanity be abstracted, and be conceived as a registered number, and according to the categories of an ideal police. Not that Matra (Bastien), born at Cinto-Monte in Corsica, appears to him incapable of error. He never thought that Bastien Matra was gifted with any great faculty of observation, nor that he applied any secret and vigorous method to the examination of facts. In truth it is not Bastien Matra he is considering, but Constable 64. A man is fallible, he thinks. Peter and Paul may be mistaken. Descartes and Gassendi, Leibnitz and Newton, Bichat and Claude Bernard were capable of error. We may all err and at any moment. The causes of error are innumerable. The perceptions of our senses and the judgment of our minds are sources of illusion and causes of uncertainty. We dare not rely on the evidence of a single man: *Testis unus, testis nullus.* But we may have faith in a number. Bastien Matra, of Cinto-Monte, is fallible. But Constable 64, when abstraction has been made of his humanity, cannot err. He is an entity. An entity has nothing in common with a man, it is free from all that confuses, corrupts and deceives men. It is pure, unchangeable and unalloyed. Wherefore the magistrates did not hesitate to reject the evidence of the mere man, Dr. David Matthieu, and to admit that of Constable 64, who is the pure idea, an emanation from divinity come down to the judgment bar.

"By following such a line of argument, President Bourriche attains to a kind of infallibility, the only kind to which a magistrate may aspire. When the man who bears witness is armed with a sword, it is the sword's evidence that must be listened to, not the man's. The man is contemptible and may be wrong. The sword is not contemptible and is always right. President Bourriche has seen deeply into the spirit of laws. Society rests on force; force must be respected as the august foundation of society. Justice is the administration of force. President Bourriche knows that Constable 64 is an integral part of the Government. The Government is immanent in each one of its officers. To slight the authority of Constable 64 is to weaken the State. To eat the leaves of an artichoke is to eat the artichoke, as Bossuet puts it in his sublime language. (*Politique tirée de l'Ecriture sainte, passim.*)

"All the swords of the State are turned in the same direction. To oppose one to the other is to overthrow the Republic. For that reason, Crainquebille, the accused, is justly condemned to a fortnight in prison and a fine of fifty francs, on the evidence of Constable 64. I seem to hear President Bourriche, himself, explaining the high and noble considerations which inspired his sentence. I seem to hear him saying:

" 'I judged this person according to the evidence of Constable 64, because Constable 64 is the emanation of public force. And if you wish to prove my wisdom, imagine the consequences had I adopted the opposite course. You will see at once that it would have been absurd. For if my judgments were in opposition to force, they would never be executed. Notice, gentlemen, that judges are only obeyed when force is on their side. A judge without policemen would be but an idle dreamer. I should be doing myself an injury if I admitted a policeman to be in the wrong. Moreover, the very spirit of laws is in opposition to my doing so. To disarm the strong and to arm the weak would be to subvert that social order which it is my duty to preserve. Justice is the sanction of established injustice. Was justice ever seen to oppose conquerors and usurpers? When an unlawful power arises, justice has only to recognize it and it becomes lawful. Form is everything; and between crime and innocence there is but the thickness of a piece of stamped paper. It was for you, Crainquebille, to be the strongest. If, after having cried: "*Mort aux vaches!*" you had declared yourself emperor, dictator, President of the Republic or even town councillor, I assure you you would not have been sentenced to pass a fortnight in prison, and to pay a fine of fifty francs. I should have acquitted you. You may be sure of that.'

"Such would have doubtless been the words of President Bourriche; for he has a judicial mind, and he knows what a magistrate owes to society. With order and regularity he defends social principles. Justice is social. Only wrong-headed persons would make justice out to be human and reasonable. Justice is administered upon fixed rules, not in obedience to physical emotions and flashes of intelligence. Above all things do not ask justice to be just, it has no need to be just since it is justice, and I might even say that the idea of just justice can have only arisen in the brains of an anarchist. True, President Magnaud pronounces just sentences; but if they are reversed, that is still justice.

"The true judge weighs his evidence with weights that are weapons. So it was in the Crainquebille affair, and in other more famous cases."

Thus said Monsieur Jean Lermite as he paced up and down the Salle des Pas Perdus.

Scratching the tip of his nose, Maître Joseph Aubarré, who knows the Palais well, replied:

"If you want to hear what I think, I don't believe that President Bourriche rose to so lofty a metaphysical plane. In my opinion, when he received as true the evidence of Constable 64, he merely acted according to precedent. Imitation lies at the root of

most human actions. A respectable person is one who conforms to custom. People are called good when they do as others do."

CHAPTER V

CRAINQUEBILLE SUBMITS TO THE LAWS OF THE REPUBLIC

HAVING been taken back to his prison, Crainquebille sat down on his chained stool, filled with astonishment and admiration. He, himself, was not quite sure whether the magistrates were mistaken. The tribunal had concealed its essential weakness beneath the majesty of form. He could not believe that he was in the right, as against magistrates whose reasons he had not understood: it was impossible for him to conceive that anything could go wrong in so elaborate a ceremony. For, unaccustomed to attending Mass or frequenting the Elysée, he had never in his life witnessed anything so grand as a police court trial. He was perfectly aware that he had never cried *"Mort aux vaches!"* That for having said it he should have been sentenced to a fortnight's imprisonment seemed to him an august mystery, one of those articles of faith to which believers adhere without understanding them, an obscure, striking, adorable and terrible revelation.

This poor old man believed himself guilty of having mystically offended Constable 64, just as the little boy learning his first Cathechism believes himself guilty of Eve's sin. His sentence had taught him that he had cried *"Mort aux vaches!"* He must, therefore, have cried *"Mort aux vaches!"* in some mysterious manner, unknown to himself. He was transported into a supernatural world. His trial was his apocalypse.

If he had no very clear idea of the offence, his idea of the penalty was still less clear. His sentence appeared to him a solemn and superior ritual, somewhat dazzling and incomprehensible, which is not to be discussed, and for which one is neither to be praised nor pitied. If at that moment he had seen President Bourriche, with white wings and a halo round his forehead, coming down through a hole in the ceiling, he would not have been surprised at this new manifestation of judicial glory. He would have said: "This is my trial continuing!"

On the next day his lawyer visited him:

"Well, my good fellow, things aren't so bad after all! Don't be discouraged. A fortnight is soon over. We have not much to complain of."

"As for that, I must say the gentlemen were very kind, very polite: not a single rude word. I shouldn't have believed it. And the *cipal* was wearing white gloves. Did you notice?"

"Everything considered, we did well to confess."

"Perhaps."

"Crainquebille, I have a piece of good news for you. A charitable person, whose interest I have elicited on your behalf, gave me fifty francs for you. The sum will be used to pay your fine."

"When will you give me the money?"

"It will be paid into the clerk's office. You need not trouble about it."

"It does not matter. All the same I am very grateful to this person." And Crainquebille murmured meditatively: "It's something out of the common that's happening to me."

"Don't exaggerate, Crainquebille. Your case is by no means rare, far from it."

"You couldn't tell me where they've put my barrow?"

CHAPTER VI

CRAINQUEBILLE IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC OPINION

After his discharge from prison, Crainquebille trundled his barrow along the Rue Montemartre, crying: "Cabbages, turnips, carrots!" He was neither ashamed nor proud of his adventure. The memory of it was not painful. He classed it in his mind with dreams, travels and plays. But, above all things, he was glad to be walking in the mud, along the paved streets, and to see overhead the rainy sky of the town. At every corner he stopped to have a drink; then, gay and unconstrained, spitting in his hands in order to moisten his horny palms, he would seize the shafts and push on his barrow. Meanwhile a flight of sparrows, as poor and as early as he, seeking their livelihood in the road, flew off at the sound of his familiar cry: "Cabbages, turnips, carrots!" An old house wife, who had come up, said to him as she felt his celery:

"What's happened to you, Pére Crainquebille? We haven't seen you for three weeks. Have you been ill? You look rather pale."

"I'll tell you, M'ame Mailloche, I've been doing the gentleman."

Nothing in his life changed, except that he went oftener to the pub, because he had an idea it was a holiday and that he had made the acquaintance of charitable folk. He returned to his garret rather gay. Stretched on his mattress he drew over him the sacks borrowed from the chestnut-seller at the corner which served him as blankets, and he pondered: "Well, prison is not so bad; one has everything one wants there. But all the same one is better at home."

His contentment did not last long. He soon perceived that his customers looked at him askance.

"Fine celery, M'ame Cointreau!"

"I don't want anything."

"What! nothing! do you live on air, then?"

And M'ame Cointreau without deigning to reply returned to the large bakery of which she was the mistress. The shopkeepers and caretakers, who had once flocked round his barrow all green and blooming, now turned away from him. Having reached the shoemaker's, at the sign of l'Ange Gardien, the place where his adventures with justice had begun, he called:

"M'ame Bayard, M'ame Bayard, you owe me sevenpence halfpenny from last time."

But M'ame Bayard, who was sitting at her counter, did not deign to turn her head.

The whole of the Rue Montmartre was aware that Pére Crainquebille had been in prison, and the whole of the Rue Montemartre gave up his acquaintance. The rumour of his conviction had reached the Faubourg and the

noisy corner of the Rue Richer. There, about noon, he perceived Madame Laure, a kind and faithful customer, leaning over the barrow of another costermonger, young Martin. She was feeling a large cabbage. Her hair shone in the sunlight like masses of golden threads loosely twisted. And young Martin, a nobody, a good-for-nothing, was protesting with his hand on his heart that there were no finer vegetables than his. At this sight Crainquebille's heart was rent. He pushed his barrow up to young Martin's, and in a plaintive broken voice said to Madame Laure: "It's not fair of you to forsake me."

As Madame Laure herself admitted, she was no duchess. It was not in society that she had acquired her ideas of the prison van and the police-station. But can one not be honest in every station of life? Every one has his self respect; and one does not like to deal with a man who has just come out of prison. So the only notice she took of Crainquebille was to give him a look of disgust. And the old costermonger resenting the affront shouted:

"Dirty wench, go along with you."

Madame Laure let fall her cabbage and cried:

"Eh! Be off with you, you bad penny. You come out of prison and then insult folk!"

If Crainquebille had had any self-control he would never have reproached Madame Laure with her calling. He knew only too well that one is not master of one's fate, that one cannot always choose one's occupation, and that good people may be found everywhere. He was accustomed discreetly to ignore her customers' business with her; and he despised no one. But he was beside himself. Three times he called Madame Laure drunkard, wench, harridan. A group of idlers gathered round Madame Laure and Crainquebille. They exchanged a few more insults as serious as the first; and they would soon have exhausted their vocabulary, if a policeman had not suddenly appeared, and at once, by his silence and immobility, rendered them as silent and motionless as himself. They separated. But this scene put the finishing touch to the discrediting of Crainquebille in the eyes of the Faubourg Montemartre and the Rue Richer.

CHAPTER VII

RESULTS

The old man went along mumbling: "For certain she's a hussy, and none more of a hussy than she."

But at the bottom of his heart that was not the reproach he brought against her. He did not scorn her for being what she was. Rather he esteemed her for it, knowing her to be frugal and orderly. Once they had liked to talk together. She used to tell him of her parents who lived in the country. And they had both resolved to have a little garden and keep poultry. She was a good customer. And then to see her buying cabbages from young Martin, a dirty, good-for-nothing wretch; it cut him to the heart; and when she pretended to despise him, that put his back up, and then . . .

But she, alas; was not the only one who shunned him as if he had the

plague. Every one avoided him. Just like Madame Laure, Madame Cointreau the baker, Madame Bayard of l'Ange Gardien scorned and repulsed him. Why! the whole of society refused to have anything to do with him.

So because one had been put away for a fortnight one was not good enough even to sell leeks! Was it just? Was it reasonable to make a decent chap die of starvation because he had got into difficulties with a copper? If he was not to be allowed to sell vegetables then it was all over with him. Like a badly doctored wine he turned sour. After having had words with every one. For a mere nothing he would tell his customers what he thought of them and in no ambiguous terms, I assure you. If they felt his wares too long he would call them to their faces chatterer, soft head. Likewise at the wine-shop he bawled at his comrades. His friend, the chestnut-seller, no longer recognized him; old Père Crainquebille, he said, had turned into a regular porcupine. It cannot be denied: he was becoming rude, disagreeable, evil-mouthed, loquacious. The truth of the matter was that he was discovering the imperfections of society; but he had not the facilities of a Professor of Moral and Political Science for the expression of his ideas concerning the vices of the system and the reforms necessary; and his thoughts evolved devoid of order and moderation.

Misfortune was rendering him unjust. He was taking revenge on those who did not wish him ill and sometimes on those who were weaker than he. One day he boxed Alphonse, the wine-seller's little boy, on the ear, because he had asked him what it was like to be sent away. Crainquebille struck him and said:

"Dirty brat! it's your father who ought to be sent away instead of growing rich by selling poison."

A deed and a speech which did him no honour; for, as the chestnut-seller justly remarked, one ought not to strike a child, neither should one reproach him with a father whom he has not chosen.

Crainquebille began to drink. The less money he earned the more brandy he drank. Formerly frugal and sober, he himself marvelled at the change.

"I never used to be a waster," he said. "I suppose one doesn't improve as one grows old."

Sometimes he severely blamed himself for his misconduct and his laziness:

"Crainquebille, old chap, you ain't good for anything but liftin' your glass."

Sometimes he deceived himself and made out that he needed the drink.

"I must have it now and then; I must have a drop to strengthen me and cheer me up. It seems as if I had a fire in my inside; and there's nothing like the drink for quenching it."

It often happened that he missed the auction in the morning and so had to provide himself with damaged fruit and vegetables on credit. One day, feeling tired and discouraged, he left his barrow in its shed, and spent the livelong day hanging round the stall of Madame Rose, the tripe-seller, or lounging in and out of the wine-shops near the market. In the evening, sitting on a

basket, he meditated and became conscious of his deterioration. He recalled the strength of his early years: the achievements of former days, the arduous labours and the glad evenings: those days quickly passing, all alike and fully occupied; the pacing in the darkness up and down the Market pavement, waiting for the early auction; the vegetables carried in armfuls and artistically arranged in the barrow; the piping hot black coffee of Mère Théodore swallowed standing, and at one gulp; the shafts grasped vigorously; and then the loud cry, piercing as cock crow, rending the morning air as he passed through the crowded streets. All that innocent, rough life of the human pack-horse came before him. For half a century, on his travelling stall, he had borne to townsfolk worn with care and vigil the fresh harvest of kitchen gardens. Shaking his head he sighed:

"No! I'm not what I was. I'm done for. The pitcher goes so often to the well that at last it comes home broken. And then I've never been the same since my affair with the magistrates. No, I'm not the man I was."

In short he was demoralized. And when a man reaches that condition he might as well be on the ground and unable to rise. All the passers-by tread him under foot.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FINAL RESULT

Poverty came, black poverty. The old costermonger who used to come back from the Faubourg Montmarte with a bag full of five-franc pieces, had not a single coin now. Winter came. Driven out of his garret, he slept under the carts in a shed. It had been raining for days; the gutters were overflowing, and the shed was flooded.

Crouching in his barrow, over the pestilent water, in the company of spiders, rats and half-starved cats, he was meditating in the gloom. Having eaten nothing all day and no longer having the chestnut-seller's sacks for a covering, he recalled the fortnight when the Government had provided him with food and clothing. He envied the prisoners' fate. They suffer neither cold nor hunger, and an idea occurred to him:

"Since I know the trick why don't I use it?"

He rose and went out into the street. It was a little past eleven. The night was dark and chill. A drizzling mist was falling, colder and more penetrating than rain. The few passers-by crept along under cover of the houses.

Crainquebille went past the Church of Saint-Eustache and turned into the Rue Montmartre. It was deserted. A guardian of the peace stood on the pavement, by the apse of the church. He was under a gas-lamp, and all around fell a fine rain looking reddish in the gaslight. It fell on to the policeman's hood. He looked chilled to the bone; but, either because he preferred to be in the light or because he was tired of walking he stayed under the lamp, and perhaps it seemed to him a friend, a companion. In the loneliness of the night the flickering flame was his only entertainment. In his immobility he appeared hardly human. The

reflection of his boots on the wet pavement, which looked like a lake, prolonged him downwards and gave him from a distance the air of some amphibious monster half out of water. Observed more closely he had at once a monkish and a military appearance. The coarse features of his countenance, magnified under the shadow of his hood, were sad and placid. He wore a thick moustache, short and grey. He was an old copper, a man of some two-score years. Crainquebille went up to him softly, and in a weak hesitating voice, said: *"Mort aux vaches!"*

Then he awaited the result of those sacred words. But nothing came of them. The constable remained motionless and silent, with his arms folded under his short cloak. His eyes were wide open; they glistened in the darkness and regarded Crainquebille with sadness, vigilance and scorn.

Crainquebille, astonished, but still resolute, muttered:

"Mort aux vaches! I tell you."

There was a long silence in the chill darkness and the falling of the fine penetrating rain. At last the constable spoke:

"Such things are not said. . . . . For sure and for certain they are not said. At your age you ought to know better. Pass on."

"Why don't you arrest me?" asked Crainquebille.

The constable shook his head beneath his dripping hood:

"If we were to take up all the addlepates who say what they oughtn't to we should have our work cut out! . . . And what would be the use of it?"

Overcome by such magnanimous disdain, Cranquebille remained for some time stolid and silent, with his feet in the gutter. Before going, he tried to explain:

"I didn't mean to say: *Mort aux vaches!* to you. It was not for you more than for another. It was only an idea."

The constable replied sternly but kindly:

"Whether an idea or anything else it ought not to be said, because when a man does his duty and endures much he ought not to be insulted with idle words. . . . I tell you again to pass on."

Crainquebille, with head bent and arms hanging limp, plunged into the rain and darkness.

A Woman of the Streets

V. H. was elected to the Académie one Tuesday, 1841. Two days afterwards Madame de Girardin, who lived at that time in the Rue Laffitte, invited him to dinner.

At this dinner was Bugeaud, as yet only a general, who had just been appointed governor-general of Algeria, and who was just going out to his post.

Bugeaud was then a man of sixty-five years of age, vigorous, with a very fresh complexion, and pitted with smallpox. He had a certain abruptness of manner which was never rudeness. He was a mixture of rustic and man of the world, old-fashioned and easy mannered, having nothing of the heaviness of the old martinet, witty and gallant.

Madame de Girardin placed the general on her right and V. H. on her left. A conversation sprang up between the poet and the soldier, Madame de Girardin acting as interpreter.

The general was in very bad humour with Algeria. He maintained that this conquest precluded France from speaking firmly to Europe; that nothing was easier to conquer than Algeria, that the forces could easily be blockaded there, that they would be taken like rats, and that they would make but one mouthful; moreover, that it was very difficult to colonize Algeria, and that the soil was unproductive; he had examined the land himself, and he found that there was a distance of a foot and a half between each stalk of wheat.

"So then," said V. H., "that is what has become of what was formerly called the granary of the Romans! But even supposing it were as you say, I think our new conquest is a fortunate and grand affair. It is civilization trampling upon barbarism. It is an enlightened people which goes out to a people in darkness. We are the Greeks of the world; it is for us to illumine the world. Our mission is being accomplished, I only sing Hosanna! You differ from me, it is clear. You speak as a soldier, as a man of action. I speak as a philosopher and a thinker."

V. H. left Madame de Girardin rather early. It was on the 9th of January. It was snowing in large flakes. He had on thin shoes, and when he was in the street he saw that it was impossible to return home on foot. He went along the Rue Taitbout, knowing that there was a cab-rank on the boulevard at the corner of that street. There was no cab there. He waited for one to come.

He was thus waiting, like an orderly on duty, when he saw a young man, well and stylishly dressed, stoop and pick up a great handful of snow, and put it down the back of a woman of the streets who stood at the corner of the boulevard in a low-necked dress. The woman uttered a piercing shriek, fell upon the dandy, and struck him. The young man returned the blow, the woman responded, and the battle went on in a *crescendo*, so vigorously and to such extremities that the police hastened to the spot.

They seized hold of the woman and did not touch the man.

Seeing the police laying hands upon her, the unfortunate woman struggled with them. But when she was securely seized she manifested the deepest grief. While two policemen were pushing her along, each holding one of her arms, she shouted, "I have done no harm, I assure you! It is the gentleman who interfered with me. I am not guilty; I implore you leave me alone! I have done no harm, really, really!"

"Come, move on; you will have six months for this business."

The poor woman at these words, "You will have six months for this business," once more began to defend her conduct, and redoubled her supplications and entreaties. The policemen, not much moved by her tears, dragged her to a police-station in the Rue Chauchat, at the back of the Opéra.

V. H., interested in spite of himself in the unhappy woman, followed them, amid the crowd of people which is never wanting on such an occasion.

Arriving near the station, V. H. conceived the idea of going in and taking up the cause of the woman. But he said to himself that he was well known, that just then the newspapers had been full of his name for two days past, and that to mix himself up in such an affair was to lay himself open to all kinds of disagreeable banter. In short, he did not go in.

The office into which the girl had been taken was on the ground-floor, overlooking the street. He looked through the windows at what was going on. He saw the poor woman lie down upon the floor in despair and tear her hair; he was moved to pity, he began to reflect, and the result of his reflections was that he decided to go in.

When he set foot in the office a man who was seated before a table, lighted by a candle, writing, turned around and said to him in a sharp, peremptory tone of voice, "What do you want, sir?" "Sir, I was a witness of what took place just now; I come to make a deposition as to what I saw, and to speak to you in this woman's favour." At these words the woman looked at V. H. in mute astonishment, and as though dazed "Your deposition, more or less interested, will be unavailing. This woman has been guilty of an assault in a public thoroughfare. She struck a gentleman. She will get six months' imprisonment for it."

The woman once more began to cry, scream, and roll over and over. Other women, who had come and joined her, said to her, "We will come and see you. Never mind. We will bring you some linen things. Take that for the present." And at the same time they gave her money and sweetmeats.

"When you know who I am," said V. H., "you will, perhaps, change your manner and tone, and will listen to me."

"Who are you then?"

V. H. saw no reason for not giving his name.

He gave his name. The Commissary of Police, for he was a Commissary of Police, was prolific of excuses, and became as polite and deferential as he had before been arrogant; offered him a chair, and begged him to be good enough to be seated.

V. H. told him that he had seen with his own eyes a gentleman pick up a snowball and throw it down the back of the woman; that the latter, who could not even see the gentleman, had uttered a cry indicating sharp pain; that indeed she had attacked the gentleman, but that she was within her right; that apart from the rudeness of the act, the violent and sudden cold occasioned by the snow might, in certain circumstances, do the woman the most serious injury; that so far from taking away from this woman, who had possibly a mother or a child to support, the bread so miserably earned, it should rather be the man guilty of this assault upon her whom he should condemn to pay a fine; in fact, that it was not the woman who should have been arrested, but the man.

During this defence, the woman, more and more surprised, beamed with joy and emotion. "How good the gentleman is!" she said, "how good he is! I never knew so good a gentleman. But then I never saw him. I do not know him at all."

The Commissary of Police said to V. H.: "I believe all that you allege, but the policemen have reported the case, and there is a charge made out. Your deposition will be entered in the charge-sheet, you may be sure. But justice must take its course, and I cannot set the woman at liberty."

"What! After what I have just told you, and what is the truth—truth which you cannot and do not doubt—you are going to detain this woman? Then this justice is a horrible injustice!"

"There is only one condition on which I could end the matter, and that is that you would sign your deposition. Will you do so?"

"If the liberty of this woman depends on my signature, here it is."

And V. H. signed.

The woman continually repeated, "How good the gentleman is! How good he is!"

The unhappy women are astonished and grateful not only when they are treated with sympathy, they are none the less so when they are treated with justice.

Tough

November's treacherous breeze frisked westward on Grand Street, committing lese majesty at Pitt Street by buffing Rocco Gianoli squarely in the face and making off with his strictly imported cap.

The breeze abandoned the great man's head-dress almost immediately, letting it flop into the street. Ordinarily it might have carried Mr. Gianoli's curse with it, for he was not given to taking such liberties lightly, even from Nature. But this was one of his good days; Nature had been kind to him for a month and it was Rocco's boast that he always met a guy half way.

From the doorway of a cigar store came Heels Sprung to retrieve the desecrated cap. Heels was chestless, chinless, and rather aimless, but never hopeless. Some day, some day the world would know him. The day would come when Paddy Brady's Tuscaroras—the strong-arm squad from police headquarters—would apprehensively shake their heads when anyone asked what Heels Sprung was doing or where he was. He was only sixteen, you know.

He saw Rocco Gianoli's cap flip into the air and he knew Rocco—by sight. Often he had spoken to Mr. Gianoli as one speaks to the king—with almost genuflecting deference.

From Mr. Gianoli, Heels had never received nor did he expect a return salutation. It is enough that one may be on the same acre with royalty.

Reverently brushing the common dust of the lower East Side from the Gianoli crown, Heels handed it to its owner, who, as any successful monarch can, recognized true humility when he saw it.

"T'anks, kid." The president and treasurer of the Tube Rose Social Club was large and gracious of manner.

"Mention it, Mr. Gianoli," mumbled Heels, stepping back respectfully and bowing beneath the tolerance of the mighty one.

"Have a swell time on me, kid." Mr. Gianoli handed Heels a ticket.

Heels Sprung remained silently awed until the mighty Rocco Gianoli vanished in Grand Street's crowds and then he scurried down Pitt, reading the card:

Thursd'y Evening Nov'r Twenty-four
Grand Annual Mask and Civic
Ball
Tube Rose Social Club.
R. Gianoli, Pres't. R. Gianoli, Treas'r.
Prof. Eddy Gold's Manhattan Orchestra.
Prof. E. Lambassite and his Full Band.
Admission, Gent and One Lady including
Wardrobe, One Dollar.
Extra Lady Twenty Five Cents.
R. Gianoli, Chmn.

It is on the records that in the ten days between the above incident and the

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night of the ball, a demure telephone operator entered the sacred precincts of sung heroes by remaining at her switchboard while a factory burned about her. The President of the United States pinned the Congressional Medal of Honor on a fearless soldier. An unidentified man gave his life in saving three little children from death in the ocean. Two Boy Scouts went to the hospital to fight vainly for their lives after stopping a runaway horse in the park.

Proud were they in their honors, yet modest and meek; but not prouder nor more humble than Heels Sprung in his new glory. Merely to go to Rocco Gianoli's ball was little; anyone paying the dollar might participate in the revelry. But to be invited by the great man himself—the president of the Tube Rose Social Club, the boss of the Gee Gee Mob, a gang which had its representatives in the most famous of prisons and from which occupants of the electric chair had gone!

One had to be tough to be on the police books as a Gee Gee. And here was Heels, bidden to Gianoli's own racket by Gianoli himself. Please withhold that scoff, you respectables. What would you do, say, were the king to bid you to dance with him at Windsor?

The women of Heel's dreams didn't know him. He might go to the ball escorting so innocent a skirt as Rose, the colorless daughter of Heimack, the dock watchman. He would have no trouble enticing Meta Cohn to be his lady. Julia would go, although her parents might not approve, and Gerda would leap heavily at the chance.

But who were these girls? Why, ju girls—nobodies. Nice enough; that wa the trouble. Just nice. What woul they do or say if, for example, Bird Eye Mabel, Rocco Gianoli's skirt, we to address them? Why, they'd merel giggle and, later, talk brazenly about h red lips and her lustrous, drugged eye But Mabel was a somebody. She wa the sort to tote a gun for her man.

No, better to go stag—alone—than t be handicapped with any of these hun drum janes who not only lacked reve ence for the mighty but spoke sham fully of the gangsters and their wome So Heels went alone.

At the entrance to Berg's Casino stoo four of Paddy Brady's Tuscaroras frisk ing the male guests as they entered. Th evening was young and only the inco sequentials had arrived. Heels mingle importantly with the crowd of chau feurs, policemen, and other rough boy that populated the curb. At ten o'cloc the first of the celebrities appeared—th Skidding Kid, with a lady on each mu cular arm.

The Kid was magnificent. Tightl dressed in a form-fitting dinner jacke patent leather pumps as light as pape proper trousers which clung like a circu performer's tights, and a lustrous derb hat cocked upon heavy hair as blac and shiny as his shoes, he handed th ladies from the taxi and mounted th stoop with the grace of a ballet dance

At the door of Berg's Casino the fir detective smacked the Kid on the po kets and patted his trim hips. The K was a welterweight. The Tuscaro was a heavy and his hand was propo tionately solid. Dexterously the K

was twirled around and the second strongarm clapped him vigorously on the ribs and with the same motion sent the edge of his hands to the Kid's armpits. The Kid was clean. Not a piece of hardware on his pristine person.

A shove sent him indoors to rejoin his disdainful ladies. His smile had not deserted him.

"Cheest, Moiphy," he said in nicely modulated voice, "ift I'da had anything you'd 'a' busted it. Happy days."

Heels Sprung watched half hypnotized. His poor hands played aimlessly at his belt. His slack jaw was at ease, revealing rabbit teeth. He wondered if any stranger in the crowd knew that *he* was a friend of the great Gianoli; that *he, too,* would presently mount those steps and be frisked. Heels resolved to wait until Gianoli himself appeared. Then, as the crowd gaped, he, Heels Sprung, would go in. The crowd would wonder who *he* was. Let them keep on wondering; one day they would all know.

Gianoli arrived at eleven with the gorgeous Bird's Eye Mabel on one arm and another lady, Mabel's cousin from Chicago, on the other. Five hundred strong men held their breath as Murphy and his pals explored the great man for trouble. And then Heels advanced for the ordeal. He tried to carry himself as Gianoli and the Skidding Kid had done, with ease, hauteur, condescension, but impartial judges would have marked it short of perfect. Nevertheless, Heels did it well. Without haste and with an excellent imitation of unconcern, Heels mounted the steps.

Murphy was laughing agreeably at something one of his brother strong-arms had said.

At the top of the stoop Heels halted and lifted his arms, as though about to flap them winglike. He cleared his throat. Let the frisking begin!

But Murphy had just remembered another good line, and there were others coming up the steps. Down on the curb somebody laughed. Then others laughed.

"Hey, Moiphy," yelled a taxi driver, "they's a guy goin' to fly over yer hed."

Murphy turned to Heels and observed the blocked steps. He surveyed the skinny boy who awaited his brusque administrations, and then took him by the arm. Ah, now for the frisking.

"Git in; git in," growled the big Tuscarora, shoving Heels through the door. "Don't block traffic."

"Keep movin'; keep movin'," sang the second strong-arm, pushing Heels farther inward. "Whaddeya wanna do—sing?"

Heels began to realize the ghastly truth. They weren't going to search him!

"Hey!" he shouted. "How do ya know I ain't got somepin on me?"

But it was a wasted effort. The fourth detective gave him a shove which sent him almost sprawling into a Gee Gee known as The Wrench.

"Step on my feet," snarled the Wrench, "an' I'll step on your nose."

The prophet Jeremiah was Polyanna's coach compared to Heel's Sprung.

Cheest, how he wisht he on'y had a cannon then. He'da showed them, he would.

Heel's didn't dance. Until one o'clock he sat with the line of slicked boys who silently viewed proceedings from the row

of chairs along the walls. He saw the great Gianoli and Mabel loping the fox trots and dipping the waltzes, and watched the Skidding Kid twirling lady after lady through the dancing throng. And, little by little, his heart grew whole again, yet a bitterness toward Murphy and all Tuscaroras had been born within him and memory still rankled.

Once Gianoli, moping his face as he trotted, dropped his handkerchief. Like a swallow, Heels darted into the throng, retrieving the handkerchief, but not before a pair of dancing feet had trodden it.

"Watch where yer goin'," snapped Heels, to the owner of the feet. "Ift you knowed who owns this blow maybe you'd fall dead, fella."

Between dances Heels returned the handkerchief to its proud owner.

"Much oblige," said Rocco.

"I'm the guy you give a ticket to the oth' day on Gran' Street. The day ya hat blew off. I'm the guy give it back to ya."

Heels was standing at a respectful distance. Between sentences he bowed.

"Much oblige," repeated Gianoli.

Heels inflated his chest as he walked to his seat at the wall. He hoped Murphy was looking.

Whether Murphy was looking or not, others had been. One of them, a plug of a man with shoulders that made him square, wanted to know Heel's social status. When Heels was a few feet away the gorilla leaned to a neighbor and sneered:

"Get this, willya. Gianoli's got a dog robber."

Now, the designation "dog robber," which in the army is attached to an officer's servant or striker, had little significance for Heels Sprung, who hadn't been a member of the American Expeditionary Forces. He resented the term, however, on general principles. Besides, it would be clear to anyone that the gorilla meant offense. Now was the time for Heels to serve notice that he was no guy's boob.

"Watcha thinkya doin', fella?" he demanded, somewhat uncertainly. "Kiddin' somebody?"

Brave words, but poorly uttered. At such affairs and in such circumstances one must *look* his words; his voice must fit them. Heels Sprung's tricky voice had gone falsetto at the end of his challenge.

"A coke, b'geez!" said the squat man, after surveying the anemic boy. "A coke. Cheest, Gianoli's got a cokie for a dog robber."

"Yeh," shrilled Heels, "go on ahead and kid somebody."

"'Splain's everything," sneered the gorilla. "I been hearin' that Gianoli's gone soft. Looka w'at he's got for a dog robber! Say, doggie, maybe you can tell me: don't Gianoli ever come out alone after dark no more?"

Heels began to realize what impended. His chances in a fight with this stranger would be about as robust as Belgium's were against Germany. If he didn't fight, Gianoli was going to hear about it, and the news was going to spread that a Gianoli follower had been swept up or even knocked off at a Gianoli racket. And that would mean Gianoli's wrath. But if he did fight—and won! If, when the fight was halted, as it was sure to

be, quickly and vigorously, with all those Tuscaroras around, the gorilla was stretched out on the floor . . . cold. Heels Sprung, one of Rocco Gianoli's best friends!

Probably, if you had asked Heels about it later, he couldn't have explained it. He leaped toward the gorilla, who had no chance to arise from his chair. Heels' right foot described a swift arc. A crash, a scream from women, a bewildering rush of the crowd. The strong-arm men from police headquarters came battering through, their pistols ready for use. Somebody had grabbed Heels' collar and whisked him into the throng.

Two policemen carried a squat, limp form out. There was blood flowing from the unconscious gorilla's lips.

CHAPTER II

Heels was leaving, somewhat against his will, through a back door. He had only a vague recollection of how he had reached the little-known exit. Someone had snatched him from the crowd. He remembered: it was the Skidding Kid. The Kid had yanked Heels by the arm, down a flight of stairs and up another. A girl ran by the Kid's side. And now Heels was leaving the hall.

"Ya ain't gettin' the air," somebody was explaining—ah, yes; it was the Skidding Kid. "We ain't givin' you the gate, kid, on'y for yer own good, see? Ya ain't gettin' the rush. Gianoli says ya better beat it before some of the Beaver's friends come lookin' for ya. How the hell did the Beaver get in, anyway? Ya got guts, kid; ya got guts. The Beaver's cold, and we're cuttin' the racket short before nothin' starts. Ya got guts, kid; but be careful.

"Gianoli says you go to his flat for the night, see? Don't let nobody see you. Keep offa the streets all ya can, kid, and lay low in Gianoli's tonight. Gianoli says you're a good kid and to take cara yaself, see?"

"Don't worry about the Beaver, kid," said the girl (Oh, supreme bliss! It was Bird's Eye Mabel) "The dicks found the cannon on him, so you don't have to worry about the Beaver for a long time, kid. But Rocco says stay off the streets for a while. What's your name?"

"Heels Sprung. Tell 'im I seen the gat on the Beaver, and that's the reason I done it. I didn't have no cannon."

And with that pardonable lie Heels left Berg's Casino. The Beaver! Heels shivered. He had kicked the Beaver! And the Beaver had a cannon. The Beaver! He had heard of the Beaver, of course, but had never seen him. The Beaver was from the West Side.

Now would the Tuscaroras frisk him? Now would they insult him by thrusting him into rackets unexplored for weapons? Or maybe they would not allow him in any racket hereafter. Think of that! He could hear them saying:

"Here comes Heels Sprung. No use friskin' him. He never carries no gun. He don't need no gun. Fast? Why, that kid is quicker with the boot than any guy is with the cannon. And he's there with the knucks, too. No, he won't have no gun on him, but don't let him in anyway."

And then Heels saw himself nonchalantly invading a racket at midnight—the crest hour—by some mysterious

door known only to him and Gianoli. And, as he appeared on the floor, the music would play softly, lest he be annoyed. Girls, including Bird's Eye Mabel and her cousin from Chicago, would flock to him. Gunmen would take his whispered orders. An inspector of police would eye him warily, but would offer him no offense, because he was Heels Sprung and all the big politicians were behind him.

He had licked the Beaver . . .

Heels snapped out of his dream. Through the darkest streets. Through a tenement basement, over two back fences, through an alley. He was in Gianoli's place. He hid in the hallway to await the great Rocco . . . Heels Sprung, Gianoli's right-hand man.

He waited an hour; an hour and a half. It grew cold, and the thin blood of Heels Sprung was losing its fight against the chill wind. Would Rocco Gianoli never come?

Heels saw something glistening in a corner. He picked it up. A bottle. A small medicine bottle with a short neck. Just the size of one of those deadly little automatics, the kind the molls carried in their muffs or in their stockings. Just the size. It fitted nicely into Heels' hand. It was dark there in the hallway.

A truck went lumbering by, piled high with merchandise. Coolly, as befitted so desparate a man, Heels took careful aim at the driver. A cinch! He pulled an imaginary trigger. Nothing to it—nothing at all. Heels Sprung's automatic never missed. The chaffeur's helper, seeing his partner fall and the truck lurch toward the sidewalk, ran for it.

Heels lifted his bottle again and would have cooked the helper as he ran. But what would be the use? Bad as he was, even his enemies must say that Heels Sprung never knocked off men unnecessarily. The truck struck the curb and capsized. Heels Sprung's Gee Gees leaped forth from their hiding places and, in a trice, before the cops arrived, made off with fifty thousand dollars' worth of silk. Or maybe it might be gold from Wall Street. Not that it mattered. Another gust of nipping wind wooshed into the hall, and Heels shivered again. He thrust the bottle—that deadly automatic—into his coat pocket. He ventured to look out. The truck was uproariously turning the corner. A policeman appeared, trying doors. He would find one open, and, if he entered, he would stumble on Heels Sprung cowering in the hall.

Well, Heels couldn't wait all night for anybody, not even Gianoli. He slipped out the back door, scaled the fence, and struck south in the general direction of the Brooklyn Bridge. Some bell told him that it was two o'clock.

At City Hall Park Heels squatted on a bench. A Bowery hokie, reeking with the fumes of third rail whiskey, flopped beside him and would have drawn him into an argument on prohibition. Heels moved on. The southern boundary of City Hall Park is Mail Street, a single block connecting Park Row and Broadway.

Over toward the Broadway end of Mail Street is a stand, where, during the day, candy, peanuts, soft drinks, and hot dogs are sold. In the shadow of this Heels Sprung stopped. He had turned

up his coat collar, a barrier against the wintry air which sought his thin neck.

The concessionaire must have left a fire in the peanut roaster inside the booth, because the boards against which Heels leaned were warm. Heels squeezed against the booth the harder, for he was cold. He pressed his thin hands against the warm wood and in a little while he was once more the bad man of Berg's Casino. And under the influence of the heat he became again the successor of the great Gianoli, leader of the dreadful Gee Gees.

Across Mail Street, on a high platform running the width of the old post office, a dozen men were roaring with industry. Into six huge trucks they were heaving canvas bags. One squad would drag the bags out to the platform and another would cram them into the trucks. And standing beside each truck was a man carrying a long pistol at his hip.

Heels watched the mail dispatchers and loaders for a while and then thrust his hands into his coat pockets. The bottle! No, not a bottle; an automatic. Bag after bag of mail went into those trucks. The guards with their big cannon lolled against the hoods of the motors until, their trucks loaded, they leaped to the seat beside the chauffeur and off they'd go.

Huh! A fine lot of suckers. What did they know about protecting the mails? Who couldn't knock any one or all of them off and—well, any one of those mail bags might contain ten or twenty thousand dollars. The thing to do, of course, was to take up an advantageous position at the Park Row end of the platform and quickly stick up the first guard.

Then, while he had his hands in the air, Heels would relieve him of his gun (he wouldn't kill the guard unless it were necessary) and a couple of the most trustworthy of the Gee Gees would snake out the most promising looking sacks and throw them into the big automobile, which would be ready to make a successful getaway.

Simple? Oh, a cinch!

Wonder why Gianoli never thought of this. Hell! Gianoli was, come to think of it, a piker. When Heels Sprung took over the leadership of the Gee Gees the city would understand what a gang could do under a really fearless leader.

Gianoli lacked imagination, that's what. Just think of any really intelligent gunman missing the chance Mail Street offered. The way to do it would be this:

Heels drew his automatic. Slowly he raised it until the muzzle was covering the red head of the guard across the street. A cold sneer hardened the face of Heels Sprung. New York's worst gangster. The way to do it was this. Slowly but firmly Heels was pressing the trigger. One, two——

From Broadway, a dozen strides to the west, came a flash of light and the roar of a gun. Mail Street was in a furore. A cop came running, shouting:

"I got him! I got him!"

The red-headed guard and all the other guards rushed to where the cop stopped at the refreshment stand. Half of the mail loaders joined them. And pretty soon an ambulance appeared and

Heels Sprung was lifted in. Detectives were at Bellevue to receive him.

"Where's his gun?" the desk lieutenant demanded.

"He didn't have no gun," rumbled the cop.

"No gun, you boob? What do you mean, no gun?"

"Well I didn't find no gun. None of us did, and we searched right away. All we found was this."

The cop handed the lieutenant a small medicine bottle.

"But I seen the gun in his hand," protested the cop. "I seen him cover one of the guards with it. He was standin' in the shadow of the refreshment stand there when I come along, and I seen him cover the guard with a gun and I let him have it. But we didn't find no gun, and we all looked."

Heels Sprung was propped up on his cot. His leg was torturing him. The doctors said the shot had smashed his knee. He would always be lame. Lucky they didn't have to amputate. But pain meant little to Heels. The cop detailed to sit beside his bed had fetched him a newspaper. Slowly Heels read:

As he was about to murder the guard of a mail truck which carried a load of registered letters containing upward of $100,000 in cash and post-office orders, Heels Sprung, one of the most desperate gangsters on the lower East Side, was shot early this morning by Patrolman Hennessy of the Oak Street station.

The police say that Sprung and a dozen confederates were prepared to pounce upon the truck when the guard should fall. Patrolman Hennessy, who has been a member of the police department for fourteen years and has a wife and five children, sighted the thug as the latter was about to fire. Beating Sprung to the trigger, Hennessy fired, shattering the gunman's leg and frustrating the holdup. Sprung's confederates escaped, but the police say . . .

Sprung is known on the East Side as one of the most daring gangsters in New York. The police say . . .

Heels lay back on his pillow, a smile of bliss upon his thin face. A nurse tiptoed in, beckoning to the guardian cop.

"All right," whispered the cop; "let them come in. I'll stay behind the screen and listen."

"Kid," he said, turning to Heels, "there's a guy outside wants to visit you and the doctors say it's all right. I'll step outside a minute."

"Who is it?" demanded Heels.

"Rocco Gianoli, and they's a lady with him."

Gianoli! Bird's Eye Mabel! A new pinkness tinged Heels' cheeks. His face grew almost stern. Gianoli!

"Tell 'im," drawled Heels, "ta stick around ift he wantsta. Maybe I'll see 'em bot' after while. An' maybe not."

The Lady With the Hatchet

One of the most incomprehensible incidents that preceded the great war was certainly the one which was known as the episode of the lady with the hatchet. The solution of the mystery was unknown and would never have been known, had not circumstances in the cruellest fashion obliged Prince Rénine—or should I say, Arsène Lupin?—to take up the matter and had I not been able to-day to tell the true story from the details supplied by him.

Let me recite the facts. In a space of eighteen months, five women disappeared, five women of different stations in life, all between twenty and thirty years of age and living in Paris or the Paris district.

I will give their names: Madame Ledoue, the wife of a doctor; Mlle. Ardant, the daughter of a banker; Mlle. Honorine Vernisset, a dressmaker; and Madame Grollinger, an artist. These five women disappeared without the possibility of discovering a single particular to explain why they had left their homes, why they did not return to them, who had enticed them away, and where and how they were detained.

Each of these women, a week after her departure, was found somewhere or other in the western outskirts of Paris; and each time it was a dead body that was found, the dead body of a woman who had been killed by a blow on the head from a hatchet. And each time, not far from the woman, who was firmly bound, her face covered with blood and her body emaciated by lack of food, the marks of carriage-wheels proved that the corpse had been driven to the spot.

The five murders were so much alike that there was only a single investigation, embracing all the five enquiries and, for that matter, leading to no result. A woman disappeared; a week later, to a day, her body was discovered; and that was all. The bonds that fastened her were similar in each case; so were the tracks left by the wheels; so were the blows of the hatchet, all of which were struck vertically at the top and right in the middle of the forehead.

The motive of the crime? The five women had been completely stripped of their jewels, purses and other objects of value. But the robberies might well have been attributed to marauders or any passersby, since the bodies were lying in deserted spots. Were the authorities to believe in the execution of a plan of revenge or of a plan intended to do away with the series of persons mutually connected, persons, for instance, likely to benefit by a future inheritance? Here again the same obscurity prevailed. Theories were built up, only to be demolished forthwith by an examination of the

From the "Eight Strokes of the Clock." Copyright 1922 by Macaulay Co.

facts. Trails were followed and at once abandoned.

And suddenly there was a sensation. A woman engaged in sweeping the roads picked up on the pavement a little note-book which she brought to the local police-station. The leaves of this note-book were all blank, excepting one on which was written a list of of the murdered women, with their names set down in order of date and accompanied by three figures: Ladoue, 132; Vernisset 118; and so on.

Certainly no importance would have been attached to these entries, which anybody might have written, since every one was acquainted with the sinister list. But instead of five names, it included six! Yes, below the words "Grollinger, 128," there appeared "Williamson 114." Did this indicate a sixth murder?

The obviously English origin of the name limited the field of the investigations, which did not in fact take long. It was ascertained that, a fortnight ago, a Miss Hermione Williamson, a governess in a family at Auteuil, had left her place to go back to England and that, since then, her sisters, though she had written to tell them that she was coming over, had heard no more of her.

A fresh enquiry was instituted. A postman found the body in the Meudon woods. Miss Williamson's skull was split down the middle.

I need not describe the public excitement at this stage nor the shudder of horror which passed through the crowd when it read this list, written without a doubt in the murderer's own hand. What could be more frightful than such a record kept up to date like a careful tradesman's ledger:

"On such a day I killed so-and-so; on such a day so-and-so!"

And the sum total was six dead bodies.

Against all expectation the experts in handwriting had no difficulty in agreeing and unanimously declared that the writing was "that of a woman, an educated woman, possessing artistic tastes, imagination and an extremely sensitive nature." The "lady with the hatchet," as the journalists christened her was decidedly no ordinary person; and scores of newspaper-articles made a special study of her case, exposing her mental condition and losing themselves in far-fetched explanations.

Nevertheless it was the writer of one of these articles a young journalist whose chance discovery made him the centre of the public attention, who supplied the one element of truth and shed upon the darkness the only ray of light that was to penetrate it. In casting about for the meaning of the figures which followed the six names, he had come to ask himself whether those figures did not simply represent the number of the days separating one crime from the next. All that he had to do was to check the dates. He at once found that his theory was correct. Mlle. Vernisset had been carried off one hundred and thirty-two days after Madame Ladoue: Mlle. Covereau one hundred and eighteen days after Honorine Vernisset; and so on.

There was therefore no room for doubt; and the police had no choice but to accept a solution which so precisely fitted the circumstances: the fig-

ures corresponded with the intervals. There was no mistake in the records of the lady with the hatchet.

But then one deduction became inevitable. Miss Williamson the latest victim, had been carried off on the 26th of June last, and her name was followed by the figures 114: was it not to be presumed that a fresh crime would be committed a hundred and fourteen days later, that is to say, on the 18th of October? Was it not probable that the horrible business would be repeated in accordance with the murderer's secret intentions? Were they not bound to pursue to its logical conclusion the argument which ascribed to the figures—to all the figures, to the last as well as to the others—their value as eventual dates?

Now it was precisely this deduction which was drawn and was being weighed and discussed during the few days that preceded the 18th of October, when logic demanded the performance of yet another act of the abominable tragedy. And it was only natural that, on the morning of that day Prince Rénine and Hortense when making an appointment by telephone for the evening, should allude to the newspaper-articles which they had both been reading:

"Look out!" said Rénine, laughing. "If you meet the lady with the hatchet, take the other side of the road!"

"And, if the good lady carries me off, what am I to do?"

"Strew your path with little white pebbles and say, until the very moment when the hatchet flashes in the air, 'I have nothing to fear; *he* will save me.' *He* is myself . . . and I kiss your hands. Till this evening, my dear."

That afternoon, Rénine had an appointment with Rose Andrée and Dalbrèque to arrange for their departure for the States. Between four and seven o'clock, he bought the different editions of the evening papers. None of them reported any abduction.

At nine o'clock he went to the Gymnase, where he had taken a private box.

At half-past nine, as Hortense had not arrived, he rang her up, though without thought of anxiety. The maid replied that Madame Daniel had not come in yet.

Siezed with a sudden fear, Rénine hurried to the furnished flat which Hortense was occupying for the time being, near the Parc Monceau and questioned the maid, whom he had engaged for her and who was completely devoted to him. The woman said that her mistress had gone out at two o'clock, with a stamped letter in her hand, saying that she was going to the post and that she would come back to dress. This was the last that had been seen of her.

"To whom was the letter addressed?"

"To you, sir. I saw the writing on the envelope: Prince Serge Rénine."

He waited until midnight, but in vain. Hortense did not return; nor did she return next day.

"Not a word to any one," said Rénine to the maid. "Say that your mistress is in the country and that you are going to join her."

For his own part he had no doubt: Hortense's disappearance was explained by the very fact of the date the 18th

of October. She was the seventh victim of the lady with the hatchet.

* * * *

"The abduction," said Rénine to himself, "precedes the blow of the hatchet by a week. I have, therefore, at the present moment, seven full days before me. Let us say six, to avoid any surprise. This is Saturday: Hortense must be set free by mid-day on Friday: and, to make sure of this, I must know her hiding-place by nine o'clock on Thursday evening at latest."

Rénine wrote "THURSDAY EVENING, NINE O'CLOCK," in big letters, on a card which he nailed above the mantelpiece in his study. Then at mid-day on Saturday, the day after the disappearance, he locked himself into the study, after telling his man not to disturb him except for meals and letters.

He spent four days there, almost without moving. He had immediately sent for a set of all the leading newspapers which had spoken in detail of the first six crimes. When he had read and reread them, he closed the shutters, drew the curtains and lay down on the sofa in the dark with the door bolted, thinking.

By Tuesday evening he was no further advanced than on the Saturday. The darkness was as dense as ever. He had not discovered the smallest clue for his guidance, nor could he see the slightest reason to hope.

At times, notwithstanding his immense power of self-control and his unlimited confidence in the resources at his disposal, at times he would quake with anguish. Would he arrive in time? There was no reason why he should see more clearly during the last few days than during those which had already elapsed. And this meant that Hortense Daniel would inevitably be murdered.

The thought tortured him. He was attached to Hortense by a much stronger and deeper feeling than the appearance of the relations between them would have led an onlooker to believe. The curiosity at the beginning, the first desire, the impulse to protect Hortense, to distract her, to inspire her with a relish for existence; all this had simply turned to love. Neither of them was aware of it, because they barely saw each other save at critical times when they were occupied with the adventures of others and not with their own. But, at the first onslaught of danger, Rénine realized the place which Hortense had taken in his life and he was in despair at knowing her to be a prisoner and a martyr and at being unable to save her.

He spent a feverish, agitated night, turning the case over and over from every point of view. The Wednesday morning was also a terrible time for him. He was losing ground. Giving up his hermit-like seclusion he threw open the windows and paced to and fro through his rooms, ran out into the street and in again, as though fleeing before the thought that obsessed him:

"Hortense is suffering. . . . Hortense is in the depths. . . . She sees the hatchet. . . . She is entreating me. . . . And I can do nothing. . . ."

It was at five o'clock in the afternoon that, on examining the list of the

six names, he received that little inward shock which is a sort of signal of the truth that is being sought for. A light shot through his mind. It was not, to be sure, that brilliant light in which every detail is made plain, but it was enough to tell him in which direction to move.

His plan of campaign was formed at once. He sent Adolphe, his chauffeur, to the principal newspapers, with a few lines which were to appear in large type among the next morning's advertisements. Adolphe was also told to go to the laundry at Courbevoie where Mlle. Covereau, the second of the six victims, had been employed.

On the Thursday, Rénine did not stir out of doors. In the afternoon, he received several letters in reply to his advertisement. Then two telegrams arrived. Lastly, at three o'clock, there came a pneumatic letter, bearing the Trocadéro postmark, which seemed to be what he was expecting.

He turned up a directory, noted an address—"M. de Lourtier-Vaneau, retired colonial governor, 47 *bis*, Avenue Kléber"—and ran down to his car:

"Adolphe, 47 *bis*, Avenue Klèber."

* * * *

He was shown into a large study furnished with magnificent book-cases containing old volumes in costly bindings. M. de Lourtier-Vaneau was a man still in the prime of life, wearing a slightly grizzled beard and, by his affable manners and genuine distinction, commanding confidence and liking.

"M. de Lourtier," said Rénine, "I have ventured to call on your excellency because I read in last year's newspapers that you used to know one of the victims of the lady with the hatchet, Honorine Vernisset."

"Why of course we knew her!" cried M. de Lourtier "My wife used to employ her as a dressmaker by the day. Poor girl!"

"M. de Lourtier, a lady of my acquaintance has disappeared as the other six victims disappeared."

"What!" exclaimed M. de Lourtier, with a start. "But I have followed the newspapers carefully. There was nothing on the 18th of October."

"Yes, a woman of whom I am very fond, Madame Hortense Daniel, was abducted on the 17th of October."

"And this is the 22nd!"

"Yes; and the murder will be committed on the 24th."

"Horrible! Horrible! It must be prevented at all costs . . ."

"And I shall perhaps succeed in preventing it, with your excellency's assistance."

"But have you been to the police?"

"No. We are faced by mysteries which are, so to speak, absolute and compact, which offer no gap through which the keenest eyes can see and which it is useless to hope to clear up by ordinary methods, such as inspection of the scenes of the crimes, police enquiries, searching for finger-prints and so on. As none of those proceedings served any good purpose in the previous cases, it would be waste of time to resort to them in a seventh, similar case. An enemy who displays such skill and subtlety would not leave behind her any of those clumsy traces which are the first things that a professional detective seizes upon."

"Then what have you done?"

"Before taking any action, I have reflected. I gave four days to thinking the matter over."

M. de Lourtier-Vaneau examined his visitor closely and, with a touch of irony, asked:

"And the result of your meditations . . . . ?"

"To begin with," said Rénine refusing to be put out of countenance, "I have submitted all these cases to a comprehensive survey, which hitherto no one else had done. This enabled me to discover their general meaning, to put aside all the tangle of embarrassing theories and since no one was able to agree as to the motives of all this filthy business, to attribute it to the only class of persons capable of it."

"That is to say?"

"Lunatics, your excellency."

M. de Lourtier-Vaneau started:

"Lunatics? What an idea!"

"M. de Lourtier, the woman known as the lady with the hatchet is a madwoman."

"But she would be locked up!"

"We don't know that she's not. We don't know that she is not one of those half-mad people, apparently harmless, who are watched so slightly that they have full scope to indulge their little manias, their wild-beast instincts. Nothing could be more treacherous than these creatures. Nothing could be more crafty, more patient, more persistent, more dangerous and at the same time more absurd and more logical, more slovenly and more methodical. All these epithets, M. de Lourtier, may be applied to the doings of the lady with the hatchet. The obsession of an idea and the continual repetition of an act are characteristics of the maniac. I do not yet know the idea by which the lady with the hatchet is obsessed but I do know the act that results from it and it is always the same. The victim is bound with precisely similar ropes. She is struck by an identical blow, with the same instrument, in the same place, the middle of the forehead, producing an absolutely vertical wound. An ordinary murderer displays some variety. His trembling hand swerves aside and strikes awry. The lady with the hatchet does not tremble. It is as though she had taken measurements; and the edge of her weapon does not swerve by a hair's breadth. Need I give you any further proofs or examine all the other details with you? Surely not. You now possess the key to the riddle; and you know as I do that only a lunatic can behave in this way, stupidly, savagly, mechanically, like a striking clock or the blade of the guillotine. . ."

M. de Lourtier-Vaneau nodded his head:

"Yes that is so. One can see the whole affair from that angle. . . . and I am beginning to believe that this is how one ought to see it. But, if we admit that this madwoman has the sort of mathematical logic which governed the murders of the six victims, I see no connection between the victims themselves. She struck at random Why this victim rather than that?"

"Ah," said Rénine. "Your excellency is asking me a question which I asked myself from the first moment, the question which sums up the whole problem and which cost me so much trouble to solve! Why Hortense Daniel rather than another? Among two mil-

lions of women who might have been selected, why Hortense? Why little Vernisset? Why Miss Williamson? If the affair is such as I conceived it, as a whole, that is to say, based upon the blind and fantastic logic of a madwoman, a choice was inevitably exercised. Now in what did that choice consist? What was the quality, or the defect, or the sign needed to induce the lady with the hatchet to strike? In a word, if she chose—and she must have chosen—what directed her choice?"

"Have you found the answer?"

Rénine paused and replied:

"Yes, your excellency, I have. And I could have found it at the very outset since all that I had to do was to make a careful examination of the list of victims. But these flashes of truth are never kindled save in a brain overstimulated by effort and reflection. I stared at the list twenty times over before that little detail took a definite shape."

"I don't follow you" said M. de Lourtier-Vaneau.

"M. de Lourtier, it may be noted that, if a number of persons are brought together in any transaction, or crime, or public scandal or what not, they are almost invariably described in the same way. On this occasion, the newspapers never mentioned anything more than their surnames in speaking of Madame Ladoux, Mlle. Ardent or Mlle. Covereau. On the other hand, Mlle Vernisset and Miss Williamson were always described by their Christian names as well: Honorine and Hermione. If the same thing had been done in the case of all the six victims there would have been no mystery."

"Why not?"

"Because we should at once have realized the relation existing between the six unfortunate women, as I myself suddenly realized it on comparing those two Christian names with that of Hortense Daniel. You understand now, don't you? You see the three Christian names before your eyes. . . . "

M. de Lourtier-Vaneau seemed to be perturbed. Turning a little pale, he said:

"What do you mean? What do you mean?"

"I mean," continued Rénine in a clear voice, sounding each syllable separately "I mean that you see before your eyes three Christian names which all three begin with the same initial and which all three, by a remarkable coincidence, consist of the same number of letters, as you may prove. If you enquire at the Courbevoie laundry, where Mlle. Covereau used to work, you will find that her name was Hilairie. Here again we have the same initial and the same number of letters. There is no need to seek any farther. We are sure, are we not, that the Christian names of the victims offer the same peculiarities? And this gives us, with absolute certainty, the key to the problem which was set us. It explains the madwoman's choice. We now know the connection between the unfortunate victims. There can be no mistake about it. It's that and nothing else. And how this method of choosing confirms my theory! What proof of madness! Why kill these women rather than any others? Because their names begin with an H and consist of eight letters! You understand me, M. de Lourtier, do you

not? The number of letters is eight. That initial letter is the eighth letter of the alphabet; and the word *huit*, eight, begins with an H. Always the letter H. *And the implement used to commit the crime was a hatchet.* Is your excellency prepared to tell me that the lady with the hatchet is not a madwoman?"

Rénine interrupted himself and went up to M. de Lourtitr-Vaneau:

"What's the matter your excellency? Are you unwell?"

"No, no," said M. Lourtier, with the perspiration streaming down his forehead. "No . . . but all this story is so upsetting! Only think, I knew one of the victims! And then . . ."

Rénine took a water-bottle and tumbler from a small table, filled the glass and handed it to M. de Lourtier, who sipped a few mouthfuls from it and then, pulling himself together, continued, in a voice which he strove to make firmer than it had been:

"Very well. We'll admit your supposition. Even so, it is necessary that it should lead to tangible results. What have you done?"

"This morning I published in all the newspapers an advertisement worded as follows: 'Excellent cook seeks situation. Write before 5 P. M. to Herminie, Boulevard Haussmann, etc.' You continue to follow me, don't you, M. de Lourtier? Christian names beginning with an H and consisting of eight letters are extremely rare and are all rather out of date: Herminie, Hilairie, Hermione. Well these Christian names, for reasons which I do not understand, are essential to the madwoman. She cannot do without them. To find women bearing one of these Christian names and for this purpose only she summons up all her remaining powers of reason, discernment, reflection and intelligence. She hunts about. She asks questions. She lies in wait. She reads newspapers which she hardly understands, but in which certain details, certain capital letters catch her eye. And consequently I did not doubt for a second that this name of Herminie, printed in large type, would attract her attention and that she would be caught to-day in the trap of my advertisement."

"Did she write?" asked M. de Lourtier-Vaneau, anxiously.

"Several ladies," Rénine continued, "wrote the letters which are usual in such cases, to offer a home to the so called Herminie. But I received an express letter which struck me as interesting."

"From whom?"

"Read it, M. de Lourtier."

M. de Lourtier-Vaneau snatched the sheet from Rénine's hands and cast a glance at the signature. His first movement was one of surprise, as though he had expected something different. Then he gave a long, loud laugh of something like joy and relief.

"Why do you laugh, M. de Lourtier? You seem pleased."

"Pleased, no. But this letter is signed by my wife."

"And you were afraid of finding something else?"

"Oh no! But since it's my wife . . ."

He did not finish his sentence and said to Rénine:

"Come this way."

He led him through a passage to a little drawing-room where a fair-haired

lady, with a happy and tender expression on her comely face, was sitting in the midst of three children and helping them with their lessons.

She rose. M. de Lourtier briefly presented his visitor and asked his wife:

"Suzanne, is this express message from you?"

"To Mlle. Herminie, Boulevard Haussmann? Yes," she said, "I sent it. As you know, our parlour-maid's leaving and I'm looking for a new one."

Rénine interrupted her:

"Excuse me, madame. Just one question: where did you get the woman's address?"

She flushed. Her husband insisted.

"Tell us, Suzanne. Who gave you the address?"

"I was rung up."

"By whom?"

She hesitated and then said:

"Your old nurse."

"Félicienne?"

"Yes."

M. de Lourtier cut short the conversation and, without permitting Rénine to ask any more questions, took him back to the study.

"You see, monsieur, that pneumatic letter came from a quite natural source. Félicienne, my old nurse, who lives not far from Paris on an allowance which I make her, read your advertisement and told Madame de Lourtier of it. For, after all," he added laughing, "I don't suppose that you suspect my wife of being the lady with the hatchet."

"No."

"Then the incident is closed . . . at least on my side. I have done what I could, I have listened to your arguments and I am sorry that I can be of no more use to you. . . ."

He drank another glass of water and sat down. His face was distorted.

Rénine looked at him for a few seconds as a man will look at a failing adversary who has only to receive the knock-out blow, and, sitting down beside him, suddenly gripped his arm:

"Your excellency, if you do not speak, Hortense Daniel will be the seventh victim."

"I have nothing to say, monsieur! What do you think I know?"

"The truth! My explanations have made it plain to you. Your distress, your terror are positive proofs."

"But, after all, monsieur, if I knew, why should I be silent?"

"For fear of scandal. There is in your life, so a profound intuition assures me, something that you are constrained to hide. The truth about this monstrous tragedy, which suddenly flashed upon you, this truth, if it were known, would spell dishonour to you, disgrace . . . and you are shrinking from your duty."

M. de Lourtier did not reply. Rénine leant over him and, looking him in the eyes, whispered:

"There will be no scandal. I shall be the only person in the world to know what has happened. And I am as much interested as yourself in not attracting attention, because I love Hortense Daniel and do not wish her name to be mixed up in your horrible story."

They remained face to face during a long interval. Rénine's expression was harsh and unyielding. M. de Lourtier felt that nothing would bend him if the necessary words remained unspoken;

but he could not bring himself to utter them:

"You are mistaken," he said. "You think you have seen things that don't exist."

Rénine received a sudden and terrifying conviction that, if this man took refuge in a stolid silence, there was no hope for Hortense Daniel; and he was so much infuriated by the thought that the key to the riddle lay there, within reach of his hand, that he clutched M. de Lourtier by the throat and forced him backwards:

"I'll have no more lies! A woman's life is at stake! Speak . . . and speak at once! If not . . .!"

M. de Lourtier had no strength left in him. All resistance was impossible. It was not that Rénine's attack alarmed him, or that he was yielding to this act of violence, but he felt crushed by that indomitable will, which seemed to admit no obstacle, and he stammered:

"You are right. It is my duty to tell everything, whatever comes of it."

"Nothing will come of it, I pledge my word, on condition that you save Hortense Daniel. A moment's hesitation may undo us all. Speak. No details, but the actual facts."

"Madame de Lourtier is not my wife. The only woman who has the right to bear my name is the one whom I married when I was a young colonial official. She was a rather eccentric woman, of feeble mentality and incredibly subject to impulses that amounted to monomania. We had two children, twins, whom she worshipped and in whose company she would no doubt have recovered her mental balance and moral health, when, by a stupid accident—a passing carriage—they were killed before her eyes. The poor thing went mad . . . with the silent, secretive madness which you imagined. Some time afterwards, when I was appointed to an Algerian station, I brought her to France and put her in the charge of a worthy creature who had nursed me and brought me up. Two years later, I made the acquaintance of the woman who was to become the joy of my life. You saw her just now. She is the mother of my children and she passes as my wife. Are we to sacrifice her? Is our whole existence to be shipwrecked in horror and must our name be coupled with this tragedy of madness and blood?"

Rénine thought for a moment and asked:

"What is the other's name?"

"Hermance."

"Hermance! Still that initial . . . still those eight letters!"

"That was what made me realize everything just now," said M. de Lourtier. "When you compared the different names, I at once reflected that my unhappy wife was called Hermance and that she was mad . . . and all the proofs leapt to my mind."

"But, though we understand the selection of the victims, how are we to explain the murders? What are the symptoms of her madness? Does she suffer at all?"

"She does not suffer very much at present. But she has suffered in the past, the most terrible suffering that you can imagine: since the moment when her two children were run over before her eyes, night and day she had the horrible spectacle of their death be-

for her eyes, without a moment's interruption, for she never slept for a single second. Think of the torture of it! To see her children dying through all the hours of the long day and all the hours of the interminable night!"

"Nevertheless," Rénine objected, "it is not to drive away that picture that she commits murder?"

"Yes, possibly," said M. de Lourtier, thoughtfully, "to drive it away by sleep."

"I don't understand."

"You don't understand, because we are talking of a madwoman . . . and because all that happens in that disordered brain is necessarily incoherent and abnormal?"

"Obviously. But, all the same, is your supposition based on facts that justify it?"

"Yes, on facts which I had, in a way, overlooked but which to-day assume their true significance. The first of these facts dates a few years back, to a morning when my old nurse for the first time found Hermance fast asleep. Now she was holding her hands clutched around a puppy which she had strangled. And the same thing was repeated on three occasions."

"And she slept?"

"Yes, each time she slept a sleep which lasted several nights."

"And what conclusion did you draw?"

"I concluded that the relaxation of the nerves provoked by taking life exhausted her and predisposed her for sleep."

Rénine shuddered:

"That's it! There's not a doubt of it! The taking life, the effort of killing makes her sleep. And she began with women what had served so well with animals. All her madness has become concentrated on that one point: she kills them to rob them of their sleep! She wanted sleep; and she steals the sleep of others! That's it, isn't it? For the past two years, she has been sleeping?"

"For the past two years, she has been sleeping," stammered M. de Lourtier.

Rénine gripped him by the shoulder:

"And it never occurred to you that her madness might go farther, that she would stop at nothing to win the blessing of sleep! Let us make haste, monsieur! All this is horrible!"

They were both making for the door, when M. de Lourtier hesitated. The telephone-bell was ringing.

"It's from there," he said.

"From there?"

"Yes, my old nurse gives me the news at the same time every day."

He unhooked the receivers and handed one to Rénine, who whispered in his ear the questions he was to put.

"Is that you, Félicienne? How is she?"

"Not so bad, sir."

"Is she sleeping well?"

"Not very well, lately. Last night, indeed, she never closed her eyes. She's very gloomy just now."

"What is she doing at the moment?"

"She is in her room."

"Go to her, Félicienne, and don't leave her."

"I can't. She's locked herself in."

"You must, Félicienne. Break open the door. I'm coming straight on. . . . Hullo! Hullo! . . . Oh, damnation, they've cut us off!"

Without a word, the two men left

the flat and ran down to the avenue. Rénine hustled M. de Lourtier into the car:

"What address?"

"Ville d'Avray."

"Of course. In the very center of her operations . . . like a spider in the middle of her web! Oh, the shame of it!"

He was profoundly agitated. He saw the whole adventure in its monstrous reality.

"Yes, she kills them to steal their sleep, as she used to kill the animals. It is the same obsession, but complicated by a whole array of utterly incomprehensible practices and superstitions. She evidently fancies that the similarity of the Christian names to her own is indispensable and that she will not sleep unless her victim is an Hortense or an Honorine. It's a madwoman's argument; its logic escapes us and we know nothing of its origin; but we can't get away from it. She has to hunt and she has to find. And she finds and carries off her prey beforehand and watches over it for the appointed number of days, until the moment when, crazily, through the hole which she digs with a hatchet in the middle of the skull, she absorbs the sleep which stupefies her and grants her oblivion for a given period. And here again we see absurdity and madness. Why does she fix that period at so many days? Why should one victim ensure her a hundred and twenty days of sleep and another a hundred and twenty-five? What insanity! The calculation is mysterious and of course mad; but the fact remains that, at the end of a hundred or a hundred and twenty-five days, as the case may be, a fresh victim is sacrificed; and there have been six already and the seventh is awaiting her turn. Ah monsieur, what a terrible responsibility for you! Such a monster as that! She should never have been allowed out of sight!"

M. de Lourtier made no protest. His air of dejection, his pallor, his trembling hands, all proved his remorse and his despair:

"She deceived me," he murmured. "She was outwardly so calm, so docile! And, after all, she's in a lunatic asylum."

"Then how can she . . .?"

"The asylum," explained M. de Lourtier, "is made up of a number of separate buildings scattered over extensive grounds. The sort of cottage in which Hermance lives stands quite apart. There is first a room occupied by Félicienne, then Hermance's bedroom and two separate rooms, one of which has its windows overlooking the open country. I suppose it is there that she locks up her victims."

"But the carriage that conveys the dead bodies?"

"The stables of the asylum are quite close to the cottage. There's a horse and carriage there for station work. Hermance no doubt gets up at night, harnesses the horse and slips the body through the window."

"And the nurse who watches her?"

"Félicienne is very old and rather deaf."

"But by day she sees her mistress moving to and fro, doing this and that. Must we not admit a certain complicity?"

"Never! Félicienne herself has been deceived by Hermance's hypocrisy."

"All the same, it was she who telephoned to Madame de Lourtier first, about that advertisement. . . ."

"Very naturally. Hermance, who talks now and then, who argues, who buries herself in the newspapers, which she does not understand, as you were saying just now, but reads through them attentively, must have seen the advertisement and, having heard that we were looking for a servant, must have asked Félicienne to ring me up."

"Yes . . . yes . . . that is what I felt," said Rénine, slowly. "She marks down her victims . . . With Hortense dead, she would have known, once she had used up her allowance of sleep, where to find an eighth victim . . . But how did she entice the unfortunate women? How did she entice Hortense?"

The car was rushing along, but not fast enough to please Rénine, who rated the chauffeur:

"Push her along, Adolphe, can't you? . . . We're losing time, my man."

Suddenly the fear of arriving too late began to torture him. The logic of the insane is subject to sudden changes of mood, to any perilous idea that may enter the mind. The madwoman might easily mistake the date and hasten the catastrophe, like a clock out of order which strikes an hour too soon.

On the other hand, as her sleep was once more disturbed, might she not be tempted to take action without waiting for the appointed moment? Was this not the reason why she had locked herself into her room? Heavens, what agonies her prisoner must be suffering! What shudders of terror at the executioner's least movement!

"Faster, Adolphe, or I'll take the wheel myself! Faster, hang it!"

At last they reached Ville d'Avray. There was a steep, sloping road to the right and walls interrupted by a long railing.

"Drive round the grounds, Adolphe. We mustn't give warning of our presence, must we, M. de Lourtier? Where is the cottage?"

"Just opposite," said M. Lourtier-Vaneau.

They got out a little farther on. Rénine began to run along a bank at the side of an ill-kept sunken road. It was almost dark. M. Lourtier said:

"Here, this building standing a little way back. . . . Look at that window on the ground floor. It belongs to one of the separate rooms . . . and that is obviously how she slips out."

"But the window seems to be barred."

"Yes; and that is why no one suspected anything. But she must have found some way to get through."

The ground floor was built over deep cellars. Rénine quickly clambered up, finding a foothold on a projecting ledge of stone.

Sure enough, one of the bars was missing.

He pressed his face to the window-pane and looked in.

The room was dark inside. Nevertheless he was able to distinguish at the back a woman seated beside another woman, who was lying on a mattress. The woman seated was holding her forehead in her hands and gazing at the woman who was lying down.

"It's she," whispered M. de Lourtier,

who had also climbed the wall. "The other one is bound."

Rénine took from his pocket a glazier's diamond and cut out one of the panes without making enough noise to arouse the madwoman's attention. He next slid his hand to the window-fastening and turned it softly, while with his left hand he levelled a revolver.

"You're not going to fire surely!" M. de Lourtier-Vaneau entreated.

"If I must, I shall."

Rénine pushed open the window gently. But there was an obstacle of which he was not aware, a chair which toppled over and fell.

He leapt into the room and threw away his revolver in order to seize the madwoman. But she did not wait for him. She rushed to the door, opened it and fled, with a hoarse cry.

M. de Lourtier made as though to run after her.

"What's the use?" said Rénine, kneeling down. "Let's save the victim first."

He was instantly reassured; Hortense was alive.

The first thing that he did was to cut the cords and remove the gag that was stifling her. Attracted by the noise, the old nurse hastened to the room with a lamp, which Rénine took from her, casting its light on Hortense.

He was astounded: though livid and exhausted, with emaciated features and eyes blazing with fever, Hortense was trying to smile. She whispered:

"I was expecting you. . . . I did not despair for a moment. . . . I was sure of you. . . ."

She fainted.

An hour later after much useless searching around the cottage, they found the madwoman locked into a large cupboard in the loft. She had hanged herself.

* * * *

Hortense refused to stay another night. Besides, it was better that the cottage should be empty when the old nurse announced the madwoman's suicide. Rénine gave Félicienne minute directions as to what she should do and say: and then, assisted by the chauffeur and M. de Lourtier, carried Hortense to the car and brought her home.

She was soon convalescent. Two days later, Rénine carefully questioned her and asked her how she had come to know the madwoman

"It was very simple," she said. "My husband, who is not quite sane, as I have told you, is being looked after at Ville d'Avary; and I sometimes go to see him without telling anybody, I admit. That was how I came to speak to that poor madwoman and how, the other day, she made signs that she wanted me to visit her. We were alone. I went into the cottage. She threw herself upon me and overpowered me before I had time to cry for help. I thought it was a jest; and so it was, wasn't it: a madwoman's jest? She was quite gentle with me. . . . All the same, she let me starve. But I was so sure of you!"

"And weren't you frightened?"

"Of starving? No. Besides, she gave me some food, now and then, when the fancy took her. . . . And then I was sure of you!"

"Yes, but there was something else: that other peril. . . ."

"What other peril?" she asked, ingenuously.

Rénine gave a start. He suddenly understood—it seemed strange at first, though it was quite natural—that Hortense had not for a moment suspected and did not yet suspect the terrible danger which she had run. Her mind had not connected with her own adventure the murders committed by the lady with the hatchet.

He thought that it would always be time enough to tell her the truth. For that matter, a few days later her husband, who had been locked up for years, died in the asylum at Ville d'Avray, and Hortense, who had been recommended by her doctor a short period of rest and solitude, went to stay with a relation living near the village of Bassicourt, in the centre of France.

Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe

A YOUNG fellow, a tobacco pedler by trade, was on his way from Morristown, where he had dealt largely with the Deacon of the Shaker settlement, to the village of Parker's Falls, on Salmon River. He had a neat little cart, painted green, with a box of cigars depicted on each side pannel, and an Indian chief, holding a pipe and a golden tobacco-stalk, on the rear. The pedler drove a smart little mare, and was a young man of excellent character, keen at a bargain, but none the worse liked by the Yankees; who, as I have heard them say, would rather be shaved with a sharp razor than a dull one. Especially was he beloved by the pretty girls along the Connecticut, whose favor he used to court by presents of the best smoking tobacco in his stock; knowing well that the country lasses of New England are generally great performers on pipes. Moreover, as will be seen in the course of my story, the pedler was inquisitive, and something of a tattler, always itching to hear the news, and anxious to tell it again.

After an early breakfast at Morristown, the tobacco pedler, whose name was Dominicus Pike, had travelled seven miles through a solitary piece of woods, without speaking a word to anybody but himself and his little gray mare. It being nearly seven o'clock, he was as eager to hold a morning gossip as a city shopkeeper to read the morning paper. An opportunity seemed at hand, when, after lighting a cigar with a sunglass, he looked up, and perceived a man coming over the brow of the hill, at the foot of which the pedler had stopped his green cart. Dominicus watched him as he descended, and noticed that he carried a bundle over his shoulder on the end of a stick, and travelled with a weary, yet determined pace. He did not look as if he had started in the freshness of the morning, but had footed it all night, and meant to do the same all day.

"Good morning, mister," said Dominicus, when within speaking distance. "You go a pretty good jog. What's the latest news at Parker's Falls?"

The man pulled the broad brim of a gray hat over his eyes, and answered, rather sullenly, that he did not come from Parker's Falls, which, as being the limit of his own day's journey, the pedler had naturally mentioned in his inquiry.

"Well, then," rejoined Dominicus Pike, "let's have the latest news where you did come from. I'm not particular about Parker's Falls. Any place will answer."

Being thus importuned, the traveller—who was as ill looking a fellow as one would desire to meet, in a solitary piece of woods—appeared to hesitate a little, as if he was either searching his memory for news, or weighing the expediency of telling it. At last mounting on the step of the cart, he whispered in the ear of Dominicus, though he might have shouted aloud, and no other mortal would have heard him.

"I do remember one little trifle of news," said he. "Old Mr. Higginbotham, of Kimballton, was murdered in his orchard, at eight o'clock last night, by an Irishman and a nigger. They strung him up to the branch of a St. Michael's pear-tree, where nobody would find him till the morning."

As soon as this horrible intelligence was communicated, the stranger betook himself to his journey again, with more speed than ever, not even turning his head when Dominicus invited him to smoke a Spanish cigar and relate all the particulars. The pedler whistled to his mare and went up the hill, pondering on the doleful fate of Mr. Higginbotham, whom he had known in the way of trade, having sold him many a bunch of long nines, and a great deal of pigtail, lady's twist, and fig tobacco. He was rather astonished at the rapidity with which the news had spread. Kimballton was nearly sixty miles distant in a straight line; the murder had been perpetrated only at eight o'clock the preceding night; yet Dominicus had heard of it at seven in the morning, when, in all probability, poor Mr. Higginbotham's own family had but just discovered his corpse, hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree. The stranger on foot must have worn seven-league boots, to travel at such a rate.

"Ill news flies fast, they say," thought Dominicus Pike; "but this beats railroads. The fellow ought to be hired to go express with the President's Message."

The difficulty was solved, by supposing that the narrator had made a mistake of one day, in the date of the occurrence; so that our friend did not hesitate to introduce the story at every tavern and country store along the road, expending a whole bunch of Spanish wrappers among at least twenty horrified audiences. He found himself invariably the first bearer of the intelligence, and was so pestered with questions that he could not avoid filling up the outline, till it became quite a respectable narrative. He met with one piece of corroborative evidence. Mr. Higginbotham was a trader; and a former clerk of his, to whom Dominicus related the facts, testified that the old gentleman was accustomed to return home through the orchard, about night-

fall, with the money and valuable papers of the store in his pocket. The clerk manifested but little grief at Mr. Higginbotham's catastrophe, hinting, what the pedler had discovered in his own dealings with him, that he was a crusty old fellow, as close as a vice. His property would descend to a pretty niece who was now keeping school in Kimballton.

What with telling the news for the public good, and driving bargains for his own, Dominicus was so much delayed on the road, that he chose to put up at a tavern, about five miles short of Parker's Falls. After supper, lighting one of his prime cigars, he seated himself in the bar-room, and went through the story of the murder, which had grown so fast that it took him half an hour to tell. There were as many as twenty people in the room, nineteen of whom received it all for gospel. But the twentieth was an elderly farmer, who had arrived on horseback a short time before, and was now seated in a corner, smoking his pipe. When the story was concluded, he rose up very deliberately, brought his chair right in front of Dominicus, and stared him full in the face, puffing out the vilest tobacco smoke the pedler had ever smelt.

"Will you make affidavit," demanded he, in the tone of a country justice taking an examination, "that old Squire Higginbotham of Kimballton was murdered in his orchard the night before last, and found hanging on his great pear-tree yesterday morning?"

"I tell the story as I heard it, mister," answered Dominicus, dropping his half-burnt cigar; "I don't say that I saw the thing done. So I can't take my oath that he was murdered exactly in that way."

"But I can take mine," said the farmer, "that if Squire Higginbotham was murdered night before last, I drank a glass of bitters with his ghost this morning. Being a neighbor of mine, he called me into his store, as I was riding by, and treated me, and then asked me to do a little business for him on the road. He didn't seem to know any more about his own murder than I did."

"Why, then, it can't be a fact!" exclaimed Dominicus Pike.

"I guess he'd have mentioned, if it was," said the old farmer; and he removed his chair back to the corner, leaving Dominicus quite down in the mouth.

Here was a sad resurrection of old Mr. Higginbotham! The pedler had no heart to mingle in the conversation any more, but comforted himself with a glass of gin and water, and went to bed, where, all night long, he dreamed of hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree. To avoid the old farmer, (whom he so detested, that his suspension would have pleased him better than Mr. Higginbotham's), Dominicus rose in the gray of the morning, put the little mare into the green cart, and trotted swiftly away towards Parker's Falls. The fresh breeze, the dewy road, and the pleasant summer dawn revived his spirits, and might have encouraged him to repeat the old story, had there been anybody awake to hear it. But he met neither ox team, light wagon, chaise, horseman, nor foot traveller, till, just as he crossed Salmon River, a man came trudging down to the bridge with a bundle over his shoulder, on the end of a stick.

"Good morning, mister," said the

pedler, reining in his mare. "If you come from Kimballton or that neighborhood, may be you can tell me the real fact about this affair of old Mr. Higginbotham. Was the old fellow actually murdered two or three nights ago, by an Irishman and a nigger?"

Dominicus had spoken in too great a hurry to observe, at first, that the stranger himself had a deep tinge of negro blood. On hearing this sudden question, the Ethiopian appeared to change his skin, its yellow hue becoming a ghastly white, while, shaking and stammering, he thus replied:—

"No! no! There was no colored man! It was an Irishman that hanged him last night, at eight o'clock. I came away at seven! His folks can't have looked for him in the orchard yet."

Scarcely had the yellow man spoken when he interrupted himself, and though he seemed weary enough before, continued his journey at a pace which would have kept the pedler's mare on a smart trot. Dominicus stared after him in great perplexity. If the murder had not been committed till Tuesday night, who was the prophet that had foretold it, in all its circumstances, on Tuesday morning? If Mr. Higginbotham's corpse were not yet discovered by his own family, how come the mulatto, at above thirty miles' distance, to know that he was hanging in the orchard, especially as he had left Kimballton before the unfortunate man was hanged at all? These ambiguous circumstances, with the stranger's surprise and terror, made Dominicus think of raising a hue and cry after him, as an accomplice in the murder; since a murder, it seemed, had really been perpetrated.

"But let the poor devil go," thought the pedler. "I don't want his black blood on my head; and hanging the nigger wouldn't unhang Mr. Higginbotham. Unhang the old gentleman! It's a sin, I know; but I should hate to have him come to life a second time, and give me the lie!"

With these meditations, Dominicus Pike drove into the street of Parker's Falls, which, as everybody knows, is as thriving a village as three cotton-factories and a slitting-mill can make it. The machinery was not in motion, and but a few of the shop-doors unbarred, when he alighted in the stable-yard of the tavern, and made it his first business to order the mare four quarts of oats. His second duty, of course, was to impart Mr. Higginbotham's catastrophe to the ostler. He deemed it advisable, however, not to be too positive as to the date of the direful fact, and also to be uncertain whether it were perpetrated by an Irishman and a mulatto, or by the son of Erin alone. Neither did he profess to relate it on his own authority, or that of any one person; but mentioned it as a report generally diffused.

The story ran through the town like fire among girdled trees, and became so much the universal talk, that nobody could tell whence it had originated. Mr. Higginbotham was as well known at Parker's Falls as any citizen of the place, being part owner of the slitting-mill, and a considerable stockholder in the cotton-factories. The inhabitants felt their own prosperity interested in his fate. Such was the excitement, that the Parker's Falls Gazette anticipated its regular day of publication, and came out with half a form of blank paper and a column of double pica emphasized

with capitals, and headed HORRID MURDER OF MR. HIGGINBOTHAM! Among other dreadful details, the printed account described the mark of the cord round the dead man's neck, and stated the number of thousand dollars of which he had been robbed; there was much pathos also about the affliction of his niece, who had gone from one fainting fit to another, ever since her uncle was found hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree with his pockets inside out. The village poet likewise commemorated the young lady's grief in seventeen stanzas of a ballad. The select-men held a meeting, and, in consideration of Mr. Higginbotham's claims on the town, determined to issue handbills, offering a reward of five hundred dollars for the apprehension of his murderers, and the recovery of the stolen property.

Meanwhile, the whole population of Parker's Falls, consisting of shopkeepers, mistresses of boarding-houses, factory-girls, millmen, and school-boys, rushed into the street and kept up such a terrible loquacity, as more than compensated for the silence of the cotton-machines, which refrained from their usual din out of respect to the deceased. Had Mr. Higginbotham cared about posthumous renown, his untimely ghost would have exulted in this tumult. Our friend Dominicus, in his vanity of heart, forgot his intended precautions, and mounting on the town-pump announced himself as the bearer of the authentic intelligence which had caused so wonderful a sensation. He immediately became the great man of the moment, and had just begun a new edition of the narrative, with a voice like a field preacher, when the mail stage drove into the village street. It had travelled all night, and must have shifted horses at Kimballton, at three in the morning.

"Now we shall hear all the particulars," shouted the crowd.

The coach rumbled up to the piazza of the tavern, followed by a thousand people; for if any man had been minding his own business till then, he now left it at sixes and sevens to hear the news. The pedler, foremost in the race, discovered two passengers, both of whom had been startled from a comfortable nap to find themselves in the centre of a mob. Every man assailing them with separate questions, all propounded at once, the couple were struck speechless, though one was a lawyer and the other a young lady.

"Mr. Higginbotham! Mr. Higginbotham! Tell us the particulars about old Mr. Higginbotham!" bawled the mob. "What is the coroner's verdict? Are the murderers apprehended? Is Mr. Higginbotham's niece come out of her fainting fits? Mr. Higginbotham! Mr. Higginbotham! !"

The coachman said not a word, except to swear awfully at the ostler for not bringing him a fresh team of horses. The lawyer inside had generally his wits about him even when asleep; the first thing he did, after learning the cause of the excitement, was to produce a large, red pocket-book. Meantime, Dominicus Pike, being an extremely polite young man, and also suspecting that a female tongue would tell the story as glibly as a lawyer's, had handed the lady out of the coach. She was a fine, smart girl, now wide awake and bright as a button, and had such a sweet pretty

mouth, that Dominicus would almost as lief have heard a lovetale from it as a tale of murder.

"Gentlemen and ladies," said the lawyer, to the shopkeepers, the millmen, and the factory-girls, "I can assure you that some unaccountable mistake, or, more probably, a wilful falsehood, maliciously contrived to injure Mr. Higginbotham's credit, has excited this singular uproar. We passed through Kimballton at three o'clock this morning, and most certainly should have been informed of the murder, had any been perpetrated. But I have proof nearly as strong as Mr. Higginbotham's own oral testimony, in the negative. Here is a note, relating to a suit of his in the Connecticut courts, which was delivered me from that gentleman himself. I find it dated at ten o'clock last evening."

So saying, the lawyer exhibited the date and signature of the note, which irrefragably proved, either that this perverse Mr. Higginbotham was alive when he wrote it, or—as some deemed the more probable case, of two doubtful ones—that he was so absorbed in worldly business as to continue to transact it, even after his death. But unexpected evidence was forthcoming. The young lady, after listening to the pedler's explanation, merely seized a moment to smooth her gown and put her curls in order, and then appeared at the tavern door, making a modest signal to be heard.

"Good people," said she, "I am Mr. Higginbotham's niece."

A wondering murmur passed through the crowd, on beholding her so rosy and bright; that same unhappy niece, whom they had supposed, on the authority of the Parker's Falls Gazette, to be lying at death's door in a fainting-fit. But some shrewd fellows had doubted, all along, whether a young lady would be quite so desperate at the hanging of a rich old uncle.

"You see," continued Miss Higginbotham, with a smile, "that this strange story is quite unfounded as to myself; and I believe I may affirm it to be equally so in regard to my dear uncle Higginbotham. He has the kindness to give me a home in his house, though I contribute to my own support by teaching a school. I left Kimballton this morning to spend the vacation of commencement week with a friend, about five miles from Parker's Falls. My generous uncle, when he heard me on the stairs, called me to his bedside, and gave me two dollars and fifty cents to pay my stage fare, and another dollar for my extra expenses. He then laid his pocketbook under his pillow, shook hands with me, and advised me to take some biscuit in my bag, instead of breakfasting on the road. I feel confident, therefore, that I left my beloved relative alive, and trust that I shall find him so on my return."

The young lady courtesied at the close of her speech, which was so sensible, and well worded, and delivered with such grace and propriety, that everybody thought her fit to be preceptress of the best academy in the State. But a stranger would have supposed that Mr. Higginbotham was an object of abhorrence at Parker's Falls, and that a thanksgiving had been proclaimed for his murder; so excessive was the wrath of the inhabitants on learning their mistake. The millmen resolved to bestow public honors on Dominicus Pike, only hesitating whether to tar and feather

him, ride him on a rail, or refresh him with an ablution at the town-pump, on the top of which he had declared himself the bearer of the news. The selectmen, by advice of the lawyer, spoke of prosecuting him for a misdemeanor, in circulating unfounded reports, to the great disturbance of the peace of the commonwealth. Nothing saved Dominicus, either from mob law or a court of justice, but an eloquent appeal made by the young lady in his behalf. Addressing a few words of heartfelt gratitude to his benefactress, he mounted the green cart and rode out of town, under a discharge of artillery from the schoolboys, who found plenty of ammunition in the neighboring clay-pits and mudholes. As he turned his head, to exchange a farewell glance at Mr. Higginbotham's niece, a ball, of the consistence of hasty-pudding, hit him slap in the mouth, giving him a most grim aspect. His whole person was so bespattered with the like filthy missiles, that he had almost a mind to ride back, and supplicate for the threatened ablution at the town-pump; for, though not meant in kindness, it would now have been a deed of charity.

However, the sun shone bright on poor Dominicus, and the mud, an emblem of all stains of undeserved opprobrium, was easily brushed off when dry. Being a funny rogue, his heart soon cheered up; nor could he refrain from a hearty laugh at the uproar which his story had excited. The handbills of the selectmen would cause the commitment of all the vagabonds in the State; the paragraph in the Parker's Falls Gazette would be reprinted from Maine to Florida, and perhaps form an item in the London newspapers, and many a miser would tremble for his money-bags and life, on learning the catastrophe of Mr. Higginbotham. The pedler meditated with much fervor on the charms of the young schoolmistress, and swore that Daniel Webster never spoke nor looked so like an angel as Miss Higginbotham, while defending him from the wrathful populace at Parker's Falls.

Dominicus was now on the Kimballton turnpike, having all along determined to visit that place, though business had drawn him out of the most direct road from Morristown. As he approached the scene of the supposed murder, he continued to revolve the circumstances in his mind, and was astonished at the aspect which the whole case assumed. Had nothing occurred to corroborate the story of the first traveller, it might now have been considered as a hoax; but the yellow man was evidently acquainted either with the report or the fact; and there was a mystery in his dismayed and guilty look on being abruptly questioned. When, to this singular combination of incidents, it was added that the rumor tallied exactly with Mr. Higginbotham's character and habits of life; and that he had an orchard, and a St. Michael's pear-tree, near which he always passed at nightfall; the circumstantial evidence appeared so strong that Dominicus doubted whether the autograph produced by the lawyer, or even the niece's direct testimony, ought to be equivalent. Making cautious inquiries along the road, the pedler further learned that Mr. Higginbotham had in his service an Irishman of doubtful character, whom he had hired without a recommendation, on the score of economy.

"May I be hanged myself," exclaimed

Dominicus Pike, aloud, on reaching the top of a lonely hill, "if I'll believe old Higginbotham is unhanged, till I see him with my own eyes, and hear it from his own mouth! And as he's a real shaver, I'll have the minister or some other responsible man for an indorser."

It was growing dusk when he reached the toll-house on Kimballton turnpike, about a quarter of a mile from the village of this name. His little mare was fast bringing him up with a man on horseback, who trotted through the gate a few rods in advance of him, nodded to the toll-gatherer, and kept on towards the village. Dominicus was acquainted with the tollman, and while making change, the usual remarks on the weather passed between them.

"I suppose," said the pedler, throwing back his whiplash, to bring it down like a feather on the mare's flank, "you have not seen anything of old Mr. Higginbotham within a day or two?"

"Yes," answered the toll-gatherer. "He passed the gate just before you drove up, and yonder he rides now, if you can see him through the dusk. He's been to Woodfield this afternoon, attending a sheriff's sale there. The old man generally shakes hands and has a little chat with me; but to-night, he nodded,—as if to say, 'Charge my toll,' —and jogged on; for wherever he goes, he must always be at home by eight o'clock."

"So they tell me," said Dominicus.

"I never saw a man look so yellow and thin as the squire does," continued the toll-gatherer. "Says I to myself, to-night, he's more like a ghost or an old mummy than good flesh and blood."

The pedler strained his eyes through the twilight, and could just discern the horseman now far ahead on the village road. He seemed to recognize the rear of Mr. Higginbotham; but through the evening shadows, and amid the dust from the horse's feet, the figure appeared dim and unsubstantial; as if the shape of the mysterious old man were faintly moulded of darkness and gray light. Dominicus shivered.

"Mr. Higginbotham has come back from the other world, by way of the Kimballton turnpike," thought he.

He shook the reins and rode forward, keeping about the same distance in the rear of the gray old shadow, till the latter was concealed by a bend of the road. On reaching this point, the pedler no longer saw the man on horseback, but found himself at the head of the village street, not far from a number of stores and two taverns, clustered round the meeting-house steeple. On his left were a stone wall and a gate, the boundary of a wood-lot, beyond which lay an orchard, farther still, a mowing-field, and last of all, a house. These were the premises of Mr. Higginbotham, whose dwelling stood beside the old highway, but had been left in the background by the Kimballton turnpike. Dominicus knew the place; and the little mare stopped short by instinct; for he was not conscious of tightening the reins.

"For the soul of me I cannot get by this gate!" said he, trembling. "I never shall be my own man again, till I see whether Mr. Higginbotham is hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree!"

He leaped from the cart, gave the rein a turn around the gate-post, and ran along the green path of the wood-lot as if Old Nick were chasing behind. Just then the village clock tolled eight,

and as each deep stroke fell, Dominicus gave a fresh bound and flew faster than before, till, dim in the solitary centre of the orchard, he saw the fated pear-tree. One great branch stretched from the old contorted trunk across the path, and threw the darkest shadow on that one spot. But something seemed to struggle beneath the branch!

The pedler had never pretended to more courage than befits a man of peaceable occupation, nor could he account for his valor on this awful emergency. Certain it is, however, that he rushed forward, prostrated a sturdy Irishman with the butt end of his whip, and found—not indeed hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree, but trembling beneath it, with a halter round his neck —the old, identical Mr. Higginbotham!

"Mr. Higginbotham," said Dominicus, tremulously, "you're an honest man, and I'll take your word for it. Have you been hanged or not?"

If the riddle be not already guessed, a few words will explain the simple machinery by which this "coming event" was made to "cast its shadow before." Three men had plotted the robbery and murder of Mr. Higginbotham; two of them, successively, lost courage and fled, each delaying the crime one night by their disappearance; the third was in the act of perpetration, when a champion, blindly obeying the call of fate, like the heroes of old romance, appeared in the person of Dominicus Pike.

It only remains to say, that Mr. Higginbotham took the pedler into high favor, sanctioned his addresses to the pretty schoolmistress, and settled his whole property on their childen, allowing themselves the interest. In due time, the old gentleman capped the climax of his favors, by dying a Christian death, in bed, since which melancholy event, Dominicus Pike has removed from Kimballton, and established a large tobacco manufactory in my native village.

Miss Youghal's Sais

When Man and Woman are agreed, what can the Kazi do?—
Proverb.

Some people say that there is no romance in India. Those people are wrong. Our lives hold quite as much romance as is good for us. Sometimes more.

Strickland was in the Police, and people did not understand him; so they said he was a doubtful sort of man and passed by on the other side. Strickland had himself to thank for this. He held the extraordinary theory that a Policeman in India should try to know as much about the natives as the natives themselves. Now, in the whole of Upper India, there is only one man who can pass for Hindu or Mohammedan,

hide-dresser or priest, as he pleases. He is feared and respected by the natives from the Ghor Kathri to the Jamma Musjid; and he is supposed to have the gift of invisibility and executive control over many Devils. But this has done him no good in the eyes of the Indian Government.

Strickland was foolish enough to take that man for his model; and, following out his absurd theory, dabbled in unsavory places no respectable man would think of exploring—all among the native riff-raff. He educated himself in this peculiar way for seven years, and people could not appreciate it. He was perpetually "going Fantee" among natives, which, of course, no man with any sense believes in. He was initiated into the *Sat Bhai* at Allahabad once, when he was on leave; he knew the Lizzard-Song of the Sansis, and the *Hálli-Hukk* dance, which is a religious can-can of a startling kind. When a man knows who dance the *Hálli-Hukk,* and how, and when, and where, he knows something to be proud of. He has gone deeper than the skin. But Strickland was not proud, though he had helped once, at Jagadhri, at the Painting of the Death Bull, which no Englishman must even look upon; had mastered the thieves'-patter of the *châng-gars*; had taken a Eusufzai horse-thief alone near Attock; and had stood under the sounding-board of a Border mosque and conducted service in the manner of a Sunni Mollah.

His crowning achievement was spending eleven days as a *faquir* or priest in the gardens of Baba Atal at Amritsar, and there picking up the threads of the great Nasiban Murder Case. But people said, justly enough, "Why on earth can't Strickland sit in his office and write up his diary, and recruit and keep quiet, instead of showing up the incapacity of his seniors?" So the Nasiban Murder Case did him no good departmentally; but, after his first feeling of wrath, he returned to his outlandish custom of prying into native life. When a man once acquires a taste for this particular amusement, it abides with him all his days. It is the most fascinating thing in the world; Love not excepted. Where other men took ten days to the Hills, Strickland took leave for what he called *shikar,* put on the disguise that appealed to him at the time, stepped down into the brown crowd, and was swallowed up for awhile. He was a quiet, dark young fellow—spare, black-eyed—and, when he was not thinking of something else, a very interesting companion. Strickland on Native Progress as he had seen it was worth hearing. Natives hated Strickland; but they were afraid of him. He knew too much.

When the Youghals came into the station, Strickland—very gravely, as he did everything—fell in love with Miss Youghal; and she, after a while fell in love with him because she could not understand him. Then Strickland told the parents; but Mrs. Youghal said she was not going to throw her daughter into the worst paid Department in the Empire, and old Youghal said, in so many words, that he mistrusted Strickland's ways and works, and would thank him not to speak or write to his daughter any more. "Very well," said Strickland, for he did not wish to make his lady-love's life a burden. After one

long talk with Miss Youghal he dropped the business entirely.

The Youghals went up to Simla in April.

In July Strickland secured three months' leave on "urgent private affairs." He locked up his house—though not a native in the Province would wittingly have touched "Estreekin Sahib's" gear for the world—and went down to see a friend of his, an old dyer, at Tarn Taran.

Here all trace of him was lost, until a *sais* or groom met me on the Simla Mall with this extraordinary note:

> DEAR OLD MAN,—Please give bearer a box of cheroots—Supers, No. 1, for preference. They are freshest at the Club. I'll repay when I reappear; but at present I'm out of society. Yours,
>
> E. STRICKLAND.

I ordered two boxes, and handed them over to the *sais* with my love. That *sais* was Strickland, and he was in old Youghal's employ, attached to Miss Youghal's Arab. The poor fellow was suffering for an English smoke, and knew that, whatever happened, I should hold my tongue till the business was over.

Later on, Mrs. Youghal, who was wrapped up in her servants, began talking at houses where she called of her paragon among *saises*—the man who was never too busy to get up in the morning and pick flowers for the breakfast-table, and who blacked—actually *blacked*—the hoofs of his horse like a London coachman! The turnout of Miss Youghal's Arab was a wonder and a delight. Strickland—Dulloo, I mean—found his reward in the pretty things that Miss Youghal said to him when she went out riding. Her parents were pleased to find she had forgotten all her foolishness for young Strickland and said she was a good girl.

Strickland vows that the two months of his service were the most rigid mental discipline he has ever gone through. Quite apart from the little fact that the wife of one of his fellow-*saises* fell in love with him and then tried to poison him with arsenic because he would have nothing to do with her, he had to school himself into keeping quiet when Miss Youghal went out riding with some man who tried to flirt with her, and he was forced to trot behind carrying the blanket and hearing every word! Also, he had to keep his temper when he was slanged in the theatre porch by a policeman—especially once when he was abused by a Naik he had himself recruited from Isser Jang village—or, worse still, when a young subaltern called him a pig for not making way quickly enough.

But the life had its compensations. He obtained great insight into the ways and thefts of *saises*—enough he says to have summarily convicted half the population of the Punjab if he had been on business. He became one of the leading players at knuckle-bones, which all *jhampânis* and many *saises* play while they are waiting outside the Government House or the Gaiety Theatre of nights; he learned to smoke tobacco that was three-fourths cowdung; and he heard the wisdom of the grizzled Jemadar of the Government House grooms. Whose words are valuable. He saw many

things which amused him; and he states, on honor, that no man can appreciate Simla properly, till he has seen it from the *sais's* point of view. He also says that, if he chose to write all he saw, his head would be broken in several places.

Strickland's account of the agony he endured on wet nights, hearing the music and seeing the lights in "Benmore," with his toes tingling for a waltz and his head in a horse-blanket, is rather amusing. One of these days, Strickland is going to write a little book on his experiences. That book will be worth buying; and even more worth suppressing.

Thus, he served faithfully as Jacob served for Rachel; and his leave was nearly at an end when the explosion came. He had really done his best to keep his temper in the hearing of the flirtations I have mentioned; but he broke down at last. An old and very distinguished General took Miss Youghal for a ride, and began that specially offensive "you're-only-a-little girl" sort of flirtation—most difficult for a woman to turn aside deftly, and most maddening to listen to. Miss Youghal was shaking with fear at the things he said in the hearing of her *sais*. Dulloo—Strickland—stood it as long as he could. Then he caught hold of the General's bridle, and, in most fluent English, invited him to step off and be flung over the cliff. Next minute, Miss Youghal began to cry; and Strickland saw that he had hopelessly given himself away, and everything was over.

The General nearly had a fit, while Miss Youghal was sobbing out the story of the disguise and the engagement that was not recognized by the parents. Strickland was furiously angry with himself, and more angry with the General for forcing his hand; so he said nothing, but held the horse's head and prepared to thrash the General as some sort of satisfaction. But when the General had thoroughly grasped the story, and knew who Strickland was, he began to puff and blow in the saddle, and nearly rolled off with laughing. He said Strickland deserved a V. C., if it were only for putting on a *sais's* blanket. Then he called himself names, and vowed that he deserved a thrashing, but he was too old to take it from Strickland. Then he complimented Miss Youghal on her lover. The scandal of the business never struck him; for he was a nice old man, with a weakness for flirtations. Then he laughed again, and said that old Youghal was a fool. Strickland let go of the cob's head, and suggested that the General had better help them if that was his opinion. Strickland knew Youghal's weakness for men with titles and letters after their names and high official position. "It's rather like a forty-minute farce," said the General, "but begad, I *will* help, if it's only to escape that tremendous thrashing I deserve. Go along to your home, my *sais*-Policeman, and change into decent kit, and I'll attack Mr. Youghal. Miss Youghal, may I ask you to canter home and wait?"

* * * * * *

About seven minutes later, there was a wild hurroosh at the Club. A *sais*, with blanket and headrope, was asking all the men he knew: "For Heaven's sake lend me decent clothes!" As the men did not recognize him, there were

some peculiar scenes before Strickland could get a hot bath, with soda in it, in one room, a shirt here, a collar there, a pair of trousers elsewhere, and so on. He galloped off, with half the Club wardrobe on his back, and an utter stranger's pony under him, to the house of old Youghal. The General, arrayed in purple and fine linen, was before him. What the General had said Strickland never knew, but Youghal received Strickland with moderate civility; and Mrs. Youghal, touched by the devotion of the transformed Dulloo, was almost kind. The General beamed and chuckled, and Miss Youghal came in, and almost before old Youghal knew where he was, the parental consent had been wrenched out, and Strickland had departed with Miss Youghal to the Telegraph Office to wire for his European kit. The final embarrassment was when a stranger attacked him on the Mall and asked for the stolen pony.

In the end, Strickland and Miss Youghal were married, on the strict understanding that Strickland should drop his old ways, and stick to Departmental routine, which pays the best and leads to Simla. Strickland was far too fond of his wife, just then, to break his word, but it was a sore trial to him; for the streets and the bazars, and the sounds in them, were full of meaning to Strickland, and these called to him to come back and take up his wanderings and his discoveries. Some day, I will tell you how he broke his promise to help a friend. That was long since, and he has, by this time, been nearly spoiled for what he would call *shikar*. He is forgetting the slang, and the beggar's cant, and the marks and the signs, and the drift of the under-currents, which, if a man would master, he must always continue to learn.

But he fills in his Departmental returns beautifully.

The Gray Seal

Among New York's fashionable and ultra-exclusive clubs, the St. James stood an acknowledged leader—more men, perhaps, cast an envious eye at its portals, of modest and unassuming taste, as they passed by on Fifth Avenue, than they did at any other club upon the long list that the city boasts. True, there were more expensive clubs upon whose membership roll scintillated more stars of New York's social set, but the St. James was distinctive. It guaranteed a man, so to speak—that is, it guaranteed a man to be innately a gentleman. It required money, it is true, to keep up one's membership, but there were many members who were not wealthy, as wealth is measured nowadays—there were many, even, who were pressed sometimes to

From the "Adventures of Jimmie Dale" by F. L. Packard. Copyright by George H. Doran & Co., 1917.

meet their dues and their house accounts, but the accounts were invariably promptly paid. No man, once in, could ever afford, or ever had the desire, to resign from the St. James Club. Its membership was cosmopolitan; men of every walk in life passed in and out of its doors, professional men and business men, physicians, artists, merchants, authors, engineers, each stamped with the "hall mark" of the St. James, an innate gentleman. To receive a two weeks' out-of-town visitor's card to the St. James was somthing to speak about, and men from Chicago, St. Louis, or San Francisco spoke of it with a sort of holier-than-thou air to fellow members of their own exclusive clubs, at home again.

Is there any doubt that Jimmie Dale was a gentleman—an *innate* gentleman? Jimmie Dale's father had been a member of the St. James Club, and one of the largest safe manufacturers of the United States, a prosperous, wealthy man, and at Jimmie Dale's birth he had proposed his son's name for membership. It took some time to get into the St. James; there was a long waiting list that neither money, influence, nor pull could alter by so much as one iota. Men proposed their sons' names for membership when they were born as religiously as they entered them upon the city's birth register. At twenty-one Jimmie Dale was elected to membership; and, incidentally, that same year, graduated from Harvard. It was Mr. Dale's desire that his son should enter the business and learn it from the ground up, and Jimmie Dale, for four years thereafter, had followed his father's wishes. Then his father died. Jimmie Dale had leanings toward more artistic pursuits than business. He was credited with sketching a little, writing a little; and he was credited with having received a very snug amount from the combine to which he sold out his safe-manufacturing interests. He lived a bachelor life—his mother had been dead many years—in the house that his father had left him on Riverside Drive, kept a car or two and enough servants to run his ménage smoothly, and serve a dinner exquisitely when he felt hospitably inclined.

Could there be any doubt that Jimmie Dale was innately a gentleman?

It was evening, and Jimmie Dale sat at a small table in the corner of the St. James Club dining room. Opposite him sat Herman Carruthers, a young man of his own age, about twenty-six, a leading figure in the newspaper world, whose rise from reporter to managing editor of the morning *News-Argus* within the short space of a few years had been almost meteoric.

They were at coffee and cigars, and Jimmie Dale was leaning back in his chair, his dark eyes fixed interestedly on his guest.

Carruthers, intently engaged in trimming his cigar ash on the edge of the Limoges china saucer of his coffee set, looked up with an abrupt laugh.

"No; I wouldn't care to go on record as being an advocate of crime," he said whimsically; "that would never do. But I don't mind admitting quite privately that it's been a positive regret to me that he has gone."

"Made too good 'copy' to lose, I suppose?" suggested Jimmie Dale

quizzically. "Too bad, too, after working up a theatrical name like that for him—the Gray Seal—rather unique! Who stuck that on him—you?"

Carruthers laughed—then, grown serious, leaned toward Jimmie Dale.

"You don't mean to say, Jimmie, that you don't know about that, do you?" he asked incredulously. "Why, up to a year ago the papers were full of him."

"I never read your beastly agony columns," said Jimmie Dale, with a cheery grin.

"Well," said Carruthers, "you must have skipped everything but the stock reports then."

"Granted," said Jimmie Dale. "So go on, Carruthers, and tell me about him—I dare say I may have heard of him, since you are so distressed about it, but my memory isn't good enough to contradict anything you may have to say about the estimable gentleman, so you're safe."

Carruthers reverted to the Limoges saucer and the tip of his cigar.

"He was the most puzzling, bewildering, delightful crook in the annals of crime," said Carruthers reminiscently, after a moment's silence. "Jimmie, he was the king-pin of them all. Clever isn't the word for him, or dare-devil isn't either. I used to think sometimes his motive was more than half for the pure deviltry of it, to laugh at the police and pull the noses of the rest of us that were after him. I used to dream nights about those confounded gray seals of his—that's where he got his name; he left every job he ever did with a little gray paper affair, fashioned diamond-shaped, stuck somewhere where it would be the first thing your eyes would light upon when you reached the scene, and——"

"Don't go so fast," smiled Jimmie Dale. "I don't quite get the connection. What did you have to do with this—er—Gray Seal fellow? Where do you come in?"

"I? I had a good deal to do with him," said Carruthers grimly. "I was a reporter when he first broke loose, and the ambiton of my life, after I began really to appreciate what he was, was to get him—and I nearly did, half a dozen times, only——"

"Only you never quite did, eh?" cut in Jimmie Dale slyly. "How near did you get, old man? Come on, now, no bluffing; did the Gray Seal ever even recognise you as a factor in the hare-and-hound game?"

"You're flicking on the raw, Jimmie," Carruthers answered, with a wry grimace. "He knew me, all right, confound him! He favoured me with several sarcastic notes—I'll show 'em to you some day—explaining how I'd fallen down and how I could have got him if I'd done something else." Carruthers' fist came suddenly down on the table. "And I would have got him, too, if he had lived."

"Lived!" ejaculated Jimme Dale. "He's dead, then?"

"Yes," asserted Carruthers; "he's dead."

"H'm!" said Jimmie Dale facetiously. "I hope the size of the wreath you sent was an adequate tribute of your appreciation."

"I never sent any wreath," returned Carruthers, "for the very simple reason that I didn't know where to

send it, or when he died. I said he was dead because for over a year now he hasn't lifted a finger."

"Rotten poor evidence, even for a newspaper," commented Jimmie Dale. "Why not give him credit for having, say—reformed?"

Carruthers shook his head. "You don't get it at all, Jimmie," he said earnestly. "The Gray Seal wasn't an ordinary crook—he was a classic. He was an artist, and the art of the thing was in his blood. A man like that could no more stop than he could stop breathing—and live. He's dead; nothing to it but that—he's dead. I'd bet a year's salary on it."

"Another good man gone wrong, then," said Jimmie Dale capriciously. "I suppose, though, that at least you discovered the 'woman in the case'?"

Carruthers looked up quickly, a little startled; then laughed shortly.

"What's the matter?" inquired Jimmie Dale.

"Nothing," said Carruthers. "You kind of got me for a moment, that's all. That's the way those infernal notes from the Gray Seal used to end up: 'Find the lady, old chap; and you'll get me.' He had a damned patronising familiarity that would make you squirm."

"Poor old Carruthers!" grinned Jimmie Dale. "You did take it to heart, didn't you?"

"I'd have sold my soul to get him —and so would you, if you had been in my boots," said Carruthers, biting nervously at the end of his cigar.

"And been sorry for it afterward," supplied Jmmie Dale.

"Yes, by Jove, you're right!" admitted Carruthers, "I suppose I should. I actually got to love the fellow—it was the *game,* really, that I wanted to beat."

"Well, and how about this woman? Keep on the straight and narrow path, old man," prodded Jimmie Dale.

"The woman?" Carruthers smiled. "Nothing doing! I don't believe there was one—he wouldn't have been likely to egg the police and reporters on to finding her if there had been, would he? It was a blind, of course. He worked alone, absolutely alone. That's the secret of his success, according to my way of thinking. There was never so much as an indication that he had had an accomplice in anything he ever did."

Jimmie Dale's eyes travelled around the club's homelike, perfectly appointed room. He nodded to a fellow member here and there, then his eyes rested on his guest again.

Carruthers was staring thoughtfully at his coffee cup.

"He was the prince of crooks and the father of originality," announced Carruthers abruptly, following the pause that had ensued. "Half the time there wasn't any more getting at the motive for the curious things he did, than there was getting at the Gray Seal himself."

"Carruthers," said Jimmy Dale, with a quick little nod of approval, "you're positively interesting to-night. But, so far, you've been kind of scouting around the outside edges without getting into the thick of it. Let's have some of your experiences with the Gray Seal in detail; they ought to make ripping fine yarns."

"Not to-night, Jimmie," said Carruthers; "it would take too long." He pulled out his watch mechanically as he spoke, glanced at it—and pushed back his chair. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "It's nearly half-past nine. I'd no idea we had lingered so long over dinner. I'll have to hurry; we're a morning paper, you know, Jimmie."

"What! Really! Is it as late as that." Jimmie Dale rose from his chair as Carruthers stood up. "Well, if you must——"

"I must," said Carruthers, with a laugh.

"All right, O slave." Jimmie Dale laughed back—and slipped his hand, a trick of their old college days together, through Carruthers' arm as they left the room.

He accompanied Carruthers downstairs to the door of the club, and saw his guest into a taxi; then he returned inside, sauntered through the billiard room, and from there into one of the cardrooms, where, pressed into a game, he played several rubbers of bridge before going home.

It was, therefore, well on toward midnight when Jimmie Dale arrived at his house on Riverside Drive, and was admitted by an elderly manservant.

"Hello, Jason," said Jimmie Dale pleasantly. "You still up!"

"Yes, sir," replied Jason, who had been valet to Jimmie Dale's father before him. "I was going to bed, sir, at about ten o'clock, when a messenger came with a letter. Begging your pardon, sir, a young lady, and——"

"Jason"—Jimmie Dale flung out the interruption, sudden, quick, imperative—"what did she look like?"

"Why—why, I don't exactly know as I could describe her, sir," stammered Jason, taken aback. "Very ladylike, sir, in her dress and appearance, and what I would call, sir, a beautiful face."

"Hair and eyes—what color?" demanded Jimmie Dale crisply. "Nose, lips, chin—what shape?"

"Why, sir," gasped Jason, staring at his master, "I—I don't rightly know. I wouldn't call her fair or dark, something between. I didn't take particular notice, and it wasn't overlight outside the door."

"It's too bad you weren't a younger man, Jason," commented Jimmie Dale, with a curious tinge of bitterness in his voice. "I'd have given a year's income for your opportunity to-night, Jason."

"Yes sir," said Jason helplessly.

"Well, go on," prompted Jimmie Dale. "You told her I wasn't home, and she said she knew it, didn't she? And she left the letter that I was on no account to miss receiving when I got back, though there was no need of telephoning me to the club—when I returned would do, but it was imperative that I should have it then—eh?"

"Good Lord, sir!" ejaculated Jason, his jaw dropped, "that's exactly what she did say."

"Jason," said Jimmie Dale grimly, "listen to me. If ever she comes here again, inveigle her in. If you can't inveigle her, use force; capture her, pull her in, do anything—do anything, do you hear? Only don't let her get away from you until I've come."

Jason gazed at his master as though the other had lost his reason.

"Use force, sir?" he repeated weakly —and shook his head. "You—you can't mean that, sir."

"Can't I?" inquired Jimmie Dale, with a mirthless smile. "I mean every word of it, Jason—and if I thought there was the slightest chance of her giving you the opportunity, I'd be more imperative still. As it is—where's the letter?"

"On the table in your studio, sir," said Jason, mechanically.

Jimmie Dale started toward the stairs —then turned and came back to where Jason, still shaking his head heavily, had been gazing anxiously after his master. Jimmie Dale laid him hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Jason," he said kindly, with a swift change of mood, "you've been a long time in the family—first with father, and now with me. You'd do a good deal for me, wouldn't you?"

"I'd do anything in the world for you, Master Jim," said the old man earnestly.

"Well, then, remember this," said Jimmie Dale slowly, looking into the other's eyes, "remember this—keep your mouth shut and your eyes open. It's my fault. I should have warned you long ago, but I never dreamed that she would ever come here herself. There have been times when it was practically a matter of life and death to me to know who that woman is that you saw to-night. That's all, Jason. Now go to bed."

"Master Jim," said the old man simply, "thank you, sir, thank you for trusting me. I've dandled you on my knee when you were a baby Master Jim. I don't know what it's about, and it isn't for me to ask. I thought, sir, that maybe you were having a little fun with me. But I know now, and you can trust me, Master Jim, if she ever comes again."

"Thank you, Jason," said Jimmie Dale, his hand closing with an appreciative pressure on the other's shoulder. "Good-night, Jason."

Upstairs on the first landing, Jimmie Dale opened a door, closed and locked it behind him—and the electric switch clicked under his fingers. A glow fell softly from a cluster of shaded ceiling lights. It was a large room, a very large room, running the entire depth of the house, and the effect of apparent disorder in the arrangement of its appointments seemed to breathe a sense of charm. There were great cozy, deep, leather-covered lounging chairs, a huge, leather-covered davenport, and an easel or two with half-finished sketches upon them; the walls were panelled, the panels of exquisite grain and matching; in the centre of the room stood a flat-topped rosewood desk; upon the floor was a dark, heavy velvet rug; and, perhaps most inviting of all, there was a great, old-fashioned fireplace at one side of the room.

For an instant Jimmie Dale remained quietly by the door, as though listening. Six feet he stood, muscular in every line of his body, like a well-trained athlete with no single ounce of superfluous fat about him—the grace and ease of power in his poise. His strong, clean-shaven face, as the light fell upon it now, was serious—a mood that became him well—the firm lips closed, the dark, reliant eyes a little

narrowed, a frown on the broad forehead, the square jaw clamped.

Then abruptly he walked across the room to the desk, picked up an envelope that lay upon it, and, turning again, dropped into the nearest lounging chair.

There had been no doubt in his mind, none to dispel. It was precisely what he had expected from almost the first word Jason had spoken. It was the same handwriting, the same texture of paper, and there was the same old haunting, rare, indefinable fragrance about it. Jimmie Dale's hands turned the envelope now this way, now that, as he looked at it. Wonderful hands were Jimmie Dale's, with long, slim, tapering fingers whose sensitive tips seemed now as though they were striving to decipher the message within.

He laughed suddenly, a little harshly, and tore open the envelope. Five closely written sheets fell into his hand. He read them slowly, critically, read them over again; and then, his eyes on the rug at his feet, he began to tear the paper into minute pieces between his fingers, depositing the pieces, as he tore them, upon the arm of his chair. The five sheets demolished, his fingers dipped into the heap of shreds on the arm of the chair and tore them over and over again, tore them until they were scarcely larger than bits of confetti, tore at them absently and mechanically, his eyes never shifting from the rug at his feet.

Then, with a shrug of his shoulders, as though rousing himself to present reality, a curious smile flickering on his lips, he brushed the pieces of paper into one hand, carried them to the empty fireplace, laid them down in a little pile, and set them afire. Lighting a cigarette, he watched them burn until the last glow had gone from the last charred scrap; then he crunched and scattered them with the brass-handled fender brush, and, retracing his steps across the room, flung back a portière from where it hung before a little alcove, and dropped on his knees in front of a round, squat, barrel-shaped safe—one of his own design and planning in the years when he had been with his father.

His slim, sensitive fingers played for an instant among the knobs and dials that studded the door, guided, it seemed by the sense of touch alone—and the door swung open. Within was another door, with locks and bolts as intricate and massive as the outer one. This, too, he opened; and then from the interior took out a short, thick, rolled-up leather bundle tied together with thongs. He rose from his knees, closed the safe, and drew the portière across the alcove again. With the bundle under his arm, he glanced sharply around the room, listened intently, then, unlocking the door that gave on the hall, he switched off the lights and went to his dressing room, that was on the same floor. Here, divesting himself quickly of his dinner clothes, he selected a dark tweed suit with loose-fitting, sack coat from his wardrobe, and began to put it on.

Dressed, all but his coat and vest, he turned to the leather bundle that he had placed on the table, untied the thongs, and carefully opened it out to its full length—and again that curious, cryptic smile tinged his lips. Rolled the opposite way from that in which it had

been tied up, the leather strip made a wide belt that went on somewhat after the fashion of a life preserver, the thongs being used for shoulder straps—a belt that, once on, the vest would hide completely, and, fitting close, left no telltale bulge in the outer garments. It was not an ordinary belt; it was full of stout-sewn, upright little pockets all the way round, and in the pockets grimly lay an array of fine, blued-steel, highly tempered instruments—a compact, powerful burglar's kit.

The slim, sensitive fingers passed with almost a caressing touch over the vicious little implements, and from one of the pockets extracted a thin, flat metal case. This Jimmie Dale opened, and glanced inside—between sheets of oil paper lay little rows of *gray, adhesive, diamond-shaped seals.*

Jimmie Dale snapped the case shut, returned it to its recess, and from another took out a black silk mask. He held it up to the light for examination.

"Pretty good shape after a year," muttered Jimmie Dale, replacing it.

He put on the belt, then his vest and coat. From the drawer of his dresser he took an automatic revolver and an electric flashlight, slipped them into his pocket, and went softly downstairs. From the hat stand he chose a black slouch hat, pulled it well over his eyes—and left the house.

Jimmie Dale walked down a block, then hailed a bus and mounted to the top. It was late, and he found himself the only passenger. He inserted his dime in the conductor's little resonant-belled cash receiver, and then settled back on the uncomfortable, bumping cushionless seat.

On rattled the bus; it turned across town, passed the Circle, and headed for Fifth Avenue—but Jimmie Dale, to all appearances, was quite oblivious of its movements.

It was a year since she had written him. *She!* Jimmie Dale did not smile, his lips were pressed hard together. Not a very intimate or personal appellation, that—but he knew her by no other. It *was* a woman, surely—the handwriting was feminine, the diction eminently so—and had *she* not come herself that night to Jason! He remembered the last letter, apart from the one to-night, that he had received from her. It was a year ago now—and the letter had been hardly more than a note. The police had worked themselves into a frenzy over the Gray Seal, the papers had grown absolutely maudlin—and she had written, in her characteristic way:

Things are a little too warm, aren't they, Jimmie? Let's let them cool for a year.

Since then until to-night he had heard nothing from her. It was a strange compact that he had entered into—so strange that it could never have known, could never know a parallel—unique, dangerous, bizarre, it was all that and more. It had begun really through his connection with his father's business—the business of manufacturing safes that should defy the cleverest criminals—when his brains, turned into that channel, had been pitted against the underworld, against the methods of a thousand different crooks from Maine to California, the report of whose every operation had reached him in the natural course of business, and every one of which he had studied in minutest detail.

It had begun through that—but at the bottom of it was his own restless, adventurous spirit.

He had meant to set the police by the ears, using his gray-seal device both as an added barb and that no innocent bystander of the underworld, innocent for once, might be involved—he had meant to laugh at them and puzzle them to the verge of madness, for in the last analysis they would find only an abortive attempt at crime—and he had succeeded. And then he had gone too far—and he had been caught by *her*. That string of pearls, which, to study whose effect facetiously, he had so idiotically wrapped around his wrist, and which, so ironically, he had been unable to loosen in time and had been forced to carry with him in his sudden, desperate dash to escape from Marx's, the big jeweler's, in Maiden Lane, whose strong room he had toyed with one night, had been the lever which, at *first*, she had held over him.

The bus was on Fifth Avenue now, and speeding rapidly down the deserted thoroughfare. Jimmie Dale looked up at the lighted windows of the St. James Club as they went by, smiled whimsically, and shifted in his seat, seeking a more comfortable position.

She had caught him—how he did not know—he had never seen her—did not know who she was, though time and again he had devoted all his energies for months at a stretch to a solution of the mystery. The morning following the Maiden Lane affair, indeed, before he had breakfasted, Jason had brought him the first letter from her. It had started by detailing his every move of the night before—and it had ended with an ultimatum: "The cleverness, the originality of the Gray Seal as a crook lacked but one thing," she had naively written, "and that one thing was that his crookedness required a leading string to guide it into channels that were worthy of his genius." In a word, *she* would plan the coups, and he would act at her dictation and execute them—or else how did twenty years in Sing Sing for that little Maiden Lane affair appeal to him? He was to answer by the next morning, a simple "yes" or "no" in the personal column of the morning *News-Argus*.

A threat to a man like Jimmie Dale was like flaunting a red rag at a bull, and a rage ungovernable had surged upon him. Then cold reason had come. He was caught—there was no question about that—she had taken pains to show him that he need make no mistake there. Innocent enough in his own conscience, as far as actual theft went, for the pearls would in due course be restored in some way to the possession of their owner, he would have been unable to make even his own father, who was alive then, believe in his innocence, let alone a jury of his peers. Dishonour, shame, ignominy, a long prison sentence, stared him in the face, and there was but one alternatve—to link hands with this unseen, mysterious accomplice. Well, he could at least temporise, he could always "queer" a game in some specious manner, if he were pushed too far. And so, in the next morning's *News-Argus*, Jimmie Dale had answered "yes." And then had followed those years in which there had been *no* temporising, in which every plan was carried out to the last detail,

those years of curious, unaccountable, bewildering affairs that Carruthers had spoken of, one on top of another, that had shaken the old headquarters on Mulberry Street to its foundations, until the Gray Seal had become a name to conjure with. And, yes, it was quite true, he had entered into it all, gone the limit, with an eagerness that was insatiable.

The bus had reached the lower end of Fifth Avenue, passed through Washington Square, and stopped at the end of its run. Jimmie Dale clambered down from the top, threw a pleasant "good-night" to the conductor, and headed briskly down the street before him. A little later he crossed into West Broadway, and his pace slowed to a leisurely stroll.

Here, at the upper end of the street, was a conglomerate business section of rather inferior class, catering doubtless to the poor, foreign element that congregated west of Broadway proper, and to the south of Washington Square. The street was, at first glance, deserted; it was dark and dreary, with stores and lofts on either side. An elevated train roared by overhead, with a thunderous, deafening clamour. Jimmie Dale, on the right-hand side of the street, glanced interestedly at the dark store windows as he went by. And then, a block ahead, on the other side, his eyes rested on an approaching form. As the other reached the corner and paused, and the light from the street lamp glinted on brass buttons, Jimmie Dale's eyes narrowed a little under his slouch hat. The policeman, although nonchalantly swinging a nightstick, appeared to be watching him.

Jimmie Dale went on half a block farther, stooped to the sidewalk to tie his shoe, glanced back over his shoulder—the policeman was not in sight—and slipped like a shadow into the alleyway beside which he had stopped.

It was another Jimmie Dale now—the professional Jimmie Dale. Quick as a cat, active, lithe, he was over a six-foot fence in the rear of a building in a flash, and crouched, a black shape, against the back door of an unpretentious, unkempt, dirty, secondhand shop that fronted on West Broadway—the last place certainly in all New York that the managing editor of the *News-Argus,* or any one else, for that matter, would have picked out as the setting for the second début of the Gray Seal.

From the belt around his waist, Jimmie Dale took the black silk mask, and slipped it on; and from the belt, too, came a little instrument that his deft fingers manipulated in the lock. A curious snipping sound followed. Jimmie Dale put his weight gradually against the door. The door held fast.

"Bolted," said Jimmie Dale to himself.

The sensitive fingers travelled slowly up and down the side of the door, seeming to press and feel for the position of the bolt through an inch of plank—then from the belt came a tiny saw, thin and pointed at the end, that fitted into the little handle drawn from another receptacle in the leather girdle beneath the unbuttoned vest.

Hardly a sound it made as it bit into the door. Half a minute passed—there was the faint fall of a small piece of wood—into the aperture crept the delicate, tapering fingers—came a slight

rasping of metal—then the door swung back, the dark shadow that had been Jimmie Dale vanished, and the door closed again.

A round, white beam of light glowed for an instant—and disappeared. A miscellaneous, lumbering collection of junk and odds and ends blocked the entry, leaving no more space than was sufficient for bare passageway. Jimmie Dale moved cautiously—and once more the flashlight in his hand showed the way for an instant—then darkness again.

The cluttered accumulation of secondhand stuff in the rear gave place to a little more orderly arrangement as he advanced toward the front of the store. Like a huge firefly, the flashlight twinkled, went out, twinkled again, and went out. He passed a sort of crude, partitioned-off apartment that did duty for the establishment's office, a sort of little boxed-in place it was, about in the middle of the floor. Jimmie Dale's light played on it for a moment, but he kept on toward the front door without any pause.

Every movement was quick, sure, accurate, with not a wasted second. It had been barely a minute since he had vaulted the back fence. It was hardly a quarter of a minute more before the cumbersome lock of the front door was unfastened, and the door itself pulled imperceptibly ajar.

He went swiftly back to the office now—and found it even more of a shaky, cheap affair than it had at first appeared; more like a box stall with windows around the top than anything else, the windows doubtless to permit the occupant to overlook the store from the vantage point of the high stool that stood before a long, battered, wabbly desk. There was a door to the place, too but the door was open and the key was in the lock. The ray of Jimmie Dale's flashlight swept once around the interior—and rested on an old antique, ponderous safe.

Under the mask Jimmie Dales' lips parted in a smile almost apologetic, as he viewed the helpless iron monstrosity that was little more than an insult to a trained cracksman. Then from the belt came the thin metal case and a pair of tweezers. He opened the case, and with the tweezers lifted out one of the gray-coloured, diamond-shaped seals. Holding the seal with the tweezers, he moistened the gummed side with his lips, then laid it on a handkerchief which he took from his pocket, and clapped the handkerchief against the front of the safe, sticking the seal conspicuously into place. Jimmie Dale's insignia bore no finger prints. The microscopes and magnifying glasses at headquarters had many a time regretfully assured the police of that fact.

And now his hands and fingers seemed to work like lightning. Into the soft iron bit a drill—bit in and through—bit in and through again. It was dark, pitch black—and silent. Not a sound, save the quick, dull rasp of the ratchet—like the distant gnawing of a mouse! Jimmie Dale worked fast—another hole went through the face of the old-fashioned safe—and then suddenly he straightened up to listen, every faculty tense, alert, and strained, his body thrown a little forward. *What was that!*

From the alleyway leading from the

street without, through which he himself had come, sounded the stealthy crunch of feet. Motionless in the utter darkness, Jimmie Dale listened—there was a scraping noise in the rear—some one was climbing the fence he had climbed!

In an instant the tools in Jimmie Dale's hands dissappeared into their respective pockets beneath his vest—and the sensitive fingers shot to the dial of the safe.

"Too bad," muttered Jimmie Dale plaintively to himself. "I could have made such an artistic job of it—I swear I could have cut Carruthers' profile in the hole in less than no time—to open it like this is really taking the poor old thing at a disadvantage."

He was on his knees now, one ear close to the dial, listening as the tumblers fell, while the delicate fingers spun the knob unerringly—the other ear strained toward the rear of the premises.

Came a footstep— a ray of light—a stumble—nearer—the newcomer was inside the place now, and must have found out that the back door had been tampered with. Nearer came the steps—still nearer—and then the safe door swung open under Jimmie Dale's hand, and Jimmie Dale, that he might not be caught like a rat in a trap, darted from the office—but he delayed a little too long.

From around the cluttered piles of junk and miscellany swept the light—full on Jimmie Dale. Hesitation for the smallest fraction of a second would have been fatal, but hesitation was something that in all his life Jimmie Dale had never known. Quick as a panther in its spring, he leaped full at the light and the man behind it. The rough voice, in surprised exclamation at the sudden discovery of the quarry, died in a gasp.

There was a crash as the two men met—and the other reeled back before the impact. Onto him Jimmie Dale sprang, and his hands flew for the other's throat. It was an officer in uniform! Jimmie Dale had felt the brass buttons as they locked. In the darkness there was a queer smile on Jimmie Dale's tight lips. It was no doubt *the* officer whom he had passed on the the other side of the street.

The other was a smaller man than Jimmie Dale, but powerful for his build—and he fought now with all his strength. This way and that the two men reeled, staggered, swayed, panting and gasping; with a sudden swing, every muscle brought into play for a supreme effort, Jimmie Dale hurled the other from him, sending the man sprawling back to the floor of the office, and in the winking of an eye had slammed shut the door and turned the key.

There was a bull-like roar, the shrill *cheep-cheep-cheep* of the patrolman's whistle, and a shattering crash as the officer flung his body against the partition—then the bark of a revolver shot, the tinkle of breaking glass, as the man fired through the office window—and past Jimmie Dale, speeding now for the front door, a bullet hummed viciously.

Out on the street dashed Jimmie Dale, whipping the mask from his face—and glanced like a hawk around him. For all the racket, the neighbourhood

had not yet been aroused—no one was in sight. From just overhead came the rattle of a downtown elevated train. In a hundred-yard sprint, Jimmie Dale raced it a half block to the station, tore up the steps—and a moment later dropped nonchalantly into a seat and pulled an evening newspaper from his pocket.

Jimmie Dale got off at the second station down, crossed the street, mounted the steps of the elevated again, and took the next train uptown. His movements appeared to be somewhat erratic—he alighted at the station next above the one by which he had made his escape. Looking down the street it was too dark to see much of anything, but a confused noise as of a gathering crowd reached him from what was about the location of the secondhand store. He listened appreciatively for a moment.

"Isn't it a perfectly lovely night?" said Jimmie Dale amiably to himself. "And to think of that cop running away with the idea that I didn't see him when he hid in a doorway after I passed the corner! Well, well, strange—isn't it?"

With another glance down the street, a whimsical lift of his shoulders, he headed west into the dilapidated tenement quarter that huddled for a handful of blocks near by, just south of Washington Square. It was a little after one o'clock in the morning now, and the pedestrians were casual. Jimmie Dale read the street signs on the corners as he went along, turned abruptly into an intersecting street, counted the tenements from the corner as he passed, and—for the eye of any one who might be watching—opened the street door of one of them quite as though he were accustomed and had a perfect right to do so, and went inside.

It was murky and dark within; hot, unhealthy, with lingering smells of garlic and stale cooking. He groped for the stairs and started up. He climbed one flight, then another—and one more to the top. Here, threading softly, he made an examination of the landing with a view, evidently, to obtaining an idea of the location and the number of doors that opened off from it.

His selection fell on the third door from the head of the stairs—there were four all told, two apartments of two rooms each. He paused for an instant to adjust the black silk mask, tried the door quietly, found it unlocked, opened it with a sudden, quick, brisk movement—and, stepping inside, leaned with his back against it.

"Good-morning," said Jimmie Dale pleasantly.

It was a squalid place, a miserable hole, in which a single flickering, yellow gas jet gave light. It was almost bare of furniture; there was nothing but a couple of cheap chairs, a rickety table—unpawnable. A boy, he was hardly more than that, perhaps twenty-two, from the posture in which he was huddled across the table with head buried in out-flung arms, sprang with a startled cry to his feet.

"Good-morning," said Jimmie Dale again. "Your name's Hagan, Bert Hagan—isn't it? And you work for Issac Brolsky in the secondhand store over on West Broadway—don't you?"

The boy's lips quivered, and the

gaunt, hollow, half-starved face, white, ashen-white now, was pitiful.

"I—I guess you got me," he faltered. "I—I suppose you're a plain-clothes man, though I never knew dicks wore masks."

"'They don't generally," said Jimmie Dale coolly. "It's a fad of mine—Bert Hagan."

The lad, hanging to the table, turned his head away for a moment—and there was silence.

Presently Hagan spoke again. "I'll go," he said numbly. "I won't make any trouble. Would—would you mind not speaking loud? I—I wouldn't like her to know."

"Her?" said Jimmie Dale softly.

The boy tiptoed across the room, opened a connecting door a little, peered inside, opened it a little wider—and looked over his shoulder at Jimmie Dale.

Jimmie Dale crossed to the boy, looked inside the other room—and his lip twitched queerly, as the sight sent a quick, hurt throb through his heart. A young woman, younger than the boy, lay on a tumble-down bed, a rag of clothing over her—her face with death-like pallor upon it, as she lay in what appeared to be a stupor. She was ill, critically ill; it needed no trained eye to discern the fact all too apparent to the most casual observer. The squalor, the glaring poverty here, was even more pitifully in evidence than in the other room—only here upon a chair beside the bed was a cluster of medicine bottles and a little heap of fruit.

Jimmie Dale drew back silently as the boy closed the door.

Hagan walked to the table and picked up his hat.

"I'm—I'm ready," he said brokenly. "Let's go."

"Just a minute," said Jimmie Dale. "Tell us about it."

"Twon't take long," said Hagan, trying to smile. "She's my wife. The sickness took all we had. I—I kinder got behind in the rents and things. They were going to fire us out of here—to-morrow. And there wasn't any money for the medicine, and—and the things she had to have. Maybe you wouldn't have done it—but I did. I couldn't see her dying there for want of something a little money'd buy—and—and I couldn't"—he caught his voice in a little sob—"I couldn't see her thrown out on the street like that."

"And so," said Jimmie Dale, "instead of putting old Issac's cash in the safe this evening when you locked up, you put it in your pocket instead—eh? Didn't you know you'd get caught?"

"What did it matter?" said the boy. He was twirling his misshapen hat between his fingers. "'I knew they'd know it was me in the morning when old Issac found it gone, because there wasn't anybody else to do it. But I paid the rent for four months ahead to-night, and I fixed it so's she'd have medicine and things to eat. I was going to beat it before daylight myself—I,"—he brushed his hand hurriedly across his cheek—"I didn't want to go—to leave her till I had to."

"Well, say"—there was wonderment in Jimmie Dale's tones, and his English lapsed into ungrammatical, reassuring vernacular—"ain't that queer! Say, I'm no detective. Gee, kid, did you

think I was? Say, listen to this! I cracked old Issac's safe half an hour ago —and I guess there won't be any idea going around that you got the money and I pulled a lemon. Say, I ain't superstitious, but it looks like luck meant you to have another chance, don't it?"

The hat dropped from Hagan's hands to the floor, and he swayed a little.

"You—you ain't a dick!" he stammered. "Then how'd you know about me and my name when you found the safe empty? Who told you?"

A wry grimace spread suddenly over Jimmie Dale's face beneath the mask, and he swallowed hard. Jimmie Dale would have given a good deal to have been able to answer that question himself.

"Oh, that!" said Jimmie Dale. "That's easy—I knew you worked there. Say, it's the limit, ain't it? Talk about your luck being in, why all you've got to do is to sit tight and keep your mouth shut, and you're safe as a church. Only say, what are you going to do about the money, now you've got a four months' start and are kind of landed on your feet?"

"Do?" said the boy. "I'll pay it back, little by little. I meant to. I ain't no——" He stopped abruptly.

"Crook," supplied Jimmie Dale pleasantly. "Spit it right out, kid; you won't hurt my feelings none. Well, I'll tell you—you're talking the way I like to hear you—you pay that back, slide it in without his knowing it, a bit at a time, whenever you can, and you'll never hear a yip out of me; but if you don't, why it kind of looks as though I have a right to come down your street and get my share or know the reason why—eh?"

"Then you never get any share," said Hagan, with a catch in his voice. "I'll pay it back as fast as I can."

"Sure," said Jimmie Dale. "That's right— that's what I said. Well, so long—Hagan." And Jimmie Dale had opened the door and slipped outside.

An hour later, in his dressing room in his house on Riverside Drive, Jimmie Dale was removing his coat as the telephone, a hand instrument on the table, rang. Jimmie Dale glanced at it —and leisurely proceeded to remove his vest. Again the telephone rang. Jimmie Dale took off his curious, pocketed leather belt—as the telephone repeated its summons. He picked out the little drill he had used a short while before, inspected it critically—feeling its point with his thumb, as one might feel a razor's blade. Again the telephone rang insistently. He reached languidly for the receiver, took it off its hook, and held it to his ear.

"Hello!" said Jimmie Dale with a sleepy yawn. "Hello! Hello! Why the deuce don't you yank a man out of bed at two o'clock in the morning and have done with it, and—eh? Oh, that you, Carruthers?"

"Yes," came Carruthers' voice excitedly. "Jimmie, listen—listen! The Gray Seal's come to life! He's just pulled a break on West Broadway!"

"Good Lord!" gasped Jimmie Dale. "You don't say!"

The Mystery of a Studio

WHERE the light slants down softly into one corner of a noted art museum in Boston there hangs a large picture. Its title is "Fulfillment." Discriminating art critics have alternately raved at it and praised it; from the day it appeared there it has been a fruitful source of acrimonious discussion. As for the public, it accepts the picture as a startling, amazing thing of beauty, and there is always a crowd around it.

"Fulfillment" is typified by a woman. She stands boldly forth against a languorous background of deep tones. Flesh tints are daringly laid on the semi-nude figure, diaphanous draperies hide, yet, reveal, the exquisite lines of the body. Her arms are outstretched straight toward the spectator, the black hair ripples down over her shoulders, the red lips are slightly parted. The mysteries of complete achievement and perfect life lie in her eyes.

Into this picture the artist wove the spiritual and the wordly; here he placed on canvas an elusive portrayal of success in its fullest and widest meaning. One's first impression of the picture is that it is sensual; another glance shows the underlying typification of success, and love and life are there. One by one the qualities stand forth.

The artist was Constans St. George. After the first flurry of excitement which the picture caused there came a whirlwind of criticism. Then the artist, who had labored for months on the work which he had intended and which proved to be his masterpiece, collapsed. Some said it was overwork—they were partly right; others that it was grief at the attacks of critics who did not see beyond the surface of the painting. Perhaps they, too, were partly right.

However that may be, it is a fact that for several months after the picture was exhibited St. George was in a sanitarium. The physicians said it was nervous collapse—a total breaking-down, and there were fears for his sanity. At length there came an improvement in his condition, and he returned to the world. Since then he had lived quietly in his studio, one of many in a large office building. From time to time he had been approached with offers for the picture, but always he refused to sell. A New York millionaire made a flat proposiition of fifty thousand dollars, which was as flatly refused.

The artist loved the picture as a child of his own brain; every day he visited the museum where it was exhibited and stood looking at it with something almost like adoration in his eyes. Then he went away quietly, tugging at his straggling beard and with the dim blindness of tears in his eyes. He never spoke to anyone; and always avoided that moment when a crowd was about.

Whatever the verdict of the critics or of the public on "Fulfillment," it was an admitted fact that the artist had

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placed on canvas a representation of a wonderfully beautiful woman. Therefore, after a while the question of who had been the model for "Fulfillment" was aroused. No one knew, apparently. Artists who knew St. George could give no idea—they only knew that the woman who had posed was not a professional model.

This led to speculation, in which the names of some of the most beautiful women in the United States were mentioned. Then a romance was woven. This was that the artist was in love with the original and that his collapse was partly due to her refusal to wed him. This story, as it went, was elaborated until the artist was said to be pining away for love of one whom he had immortalized in oils.

As the story grew it gained credence, and a search was still made occasionally for the model. Half a dozen times Hutchinson Hatch, a newspaper reporter of more than usual astuteness, had been on the story without success; he had seen and studied the picture until every line of it was firmly in his mind. He had seen and talked to St. George twice. The artist would answer no questions as to the identity of the model.

This, then, was the situation on the morning of Friday, November 27, when Hatch entered the reportorial rooms of his newspaper. At sight of him the City Editor removed his cigar, placed it carefully on the "official block" which adorned his flat-topped desk, and called to the reporter.

"Girl reported missing," he said, brusquely. "Name is Grace Field, and she lived at No. 195 —— Street, Dorchester. Employed in the photographic department of the Star, a big department store. Report of her disappearance made to the police early to-day by Ellen Stanford, her room-mate, also employed at the Star. Jump out on it and get all you can. Here is the official police description."

Hatch took a slip of paper and read:

"Grace Field, twenty-one years, five feet seven inches tall, weight 151 pounds, profuse black hair, dark-brown eyes, superb figure, oval face, said to be beautiful."

Then the description went into detail of her dress and other things which the police note in their minute records for a search. Hatch absorbed all these things and left his office. He went first to the department store, where he was told Miss Stanford had not appeared that day, sending a note that she was ill.

From the store Hatch went at once to the address given in Dorchester. Miss Stanford was in. Would she see a reporter? Yes. So Hatch was ushered into the modest little parlor of a boarding-house, and after a while Miss Stanford entered. She was a petite blonde, with pink cheeks and blue eyes, now reddened by weeping.

Briefly Hatch explained the purpose of his visit—an effort to find Grace Field, and Miss Stanford eagerly and tearfully expressed herself as willing to tell him all she knew.

"I have known Grace for five months," she explained; "that is, from the time she came to work at the Star. Her counter is next to mine. A friendship grew between us, and we began

rooming together. Each of us is alone in the East. She comes from the West, somewhere in Nevada, and I come from Quebec.

"Grace has never said much about herself, but I know that she had been in Boston a year or so before I met her. She lived somewhere in Brookline, I believe, but it seems that she had some funds and did not go to work until she came to the Star. This is as I understand it.

"Three days ago, on Tuesday it was, there was a letter for Grace when we came in from work. It seemed to agitate her, although she said nothing to me about what was in it, and I did not ask. She did not sleep well that night, but next morning, when we started to work, she seemed all right. That is, she was all right until we got to the subway station, and then she told me to go on to the store, saying she would be there after a while.

"I left her, and at her request explained to the manager of our floor that she would be late. From that time to this no one has seen her or heard of her. I don't know where she could have gone," and the girl burst into tears. "I'm sure something dreadful has happened to her."

"Possibly an elopement?" Hatch suggested.

"No," said the girl, quickly. "No. She was in love, but the man she was in love with has not heard of her either. I saw him the night after she disappeared. He called here and asked for her, and seemed surprised that she had not returned home, or had not been at work."

"What's his name?" asked Hatch.

"He's a clerk in a bank," said Miss Stanford. "His name is Willis—Victor Willis. If she had eloped with him I would not have been surprised but I am positive she did not, and if she did not, where is she?"

"Were there any other admirers you know of?" Hatch asked.

"No," said the girl, stoutly. "There may have been others who admired her, but none she cared for. She has told me too much—I—I know," she faltered.

"How long have you known Mr. Willis?" asked Hatch.

The girl's face flamed scarlet instantly.

"Only since I've known Grace," she replied. "She introduced us."

"Has Mr. Willis ever shown you any attention?"

"Certainly not," Miss Stanford flashed, angrily. "All his attention was for Grace."

There was the least trace of bitterness in the tone, and Hatch imagined he read it aright. Willis was a man whom both perhaps loved; it might be in that event that Miss Stanford knew more than she had said of the whereabouts of Grace Field. The next step was to see Willis.

"I suppose you'll do anything possible to find Miss Field?" he asked.

"Certainly," said the girl.

"Have you her photograph?"

"I have one, yes, but I don't think—I don't believe Grace—"

"Would like to have it published?" asked Hatch. "Possibly not, under ordinary circumstances—but now that she is missing it is the surest way of getting a trace of her. Will you get it for me?"

Miss Stanford was silent for a time.

Then apparently she made up her mind, for she arose.

"It might be well, too," Hatch suggested, "to see if you can find the letter you mentioned."

The girl nodded and went out. When she returned she had a photograph in her hand; a glimpse of it told Hatch it was a bust picture of a woman in evening dress. The girl was studying a scrap of paper.

"What is it?" asked Hatch, quickly.

"I don't know," she responded. "I was searching for the letter when I remembered she frequently tore them up and dropped them into the waste-basket. It had been emptied every day, but I looked and found this clinging to the bottom, caught between the cane."

"May I see it?" asked the reporter.

The girl handed it to him. It was evidently a piece of a letter torn from the outer edge just where the paper was folded to put it into the envelope. On it were these words and detached letters, written in a bold hand:

sday
ill you
to the
ho

Hatch's eyes opened wide.

"Do you know the handwriting?" he asked.

The girl faltered an instant.

"No," she answered finally.

Hatch studied her face a moment with cold eyes, then turned the scrap of paper over. The other side was blank. Staring down at it he veiled a glitter of anxious interest.

"And the picture?" he asked quietly.

The girl handed him the photograph. Hatch took it and as he looked it was with difficulty he restrained an exclamation of astonishment—triumphant astonishment. Finally, with his brain teeming with possibilities, he left the house, taking the photograph and the scrap of paper. Ten minutes later he was talking to his City Editor over the 'phone.

"It's a great story," he replied, briefly. "The missing girl is the mysterious model of St. George's picture, 'Fulfillment.'"

"Great," came the voice of the City Editor.

CHAPTER II

Having laid his story before his City Editor, Hatch sat down to consider the fragmentary writing. Obviously "sday" represented a day of the week—either Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, these being the only days where the letter "s" preceded the "day." This seemed to be a definite fact, but still it meant nothing. True, Miss Field had last been seen on Wednesday, but then?—nothing.

To the next part of the fragment Hatch attached the greatest importance. It was the possibility of a threat, —— "ill you." Did it mean "kill you" or "will you" or "till you" or—or what? There might be dozens of other words ending in "ill" which he did not recall at the moment. His imagination hammered the phrase into his brain as "kill you." The "to the"—the next words—were clear, but meant nothing at all. The last letters were distinctly "ho," possible "hope."

Then Hatch began real work on the story. First he saw the bank clerk, Victor Willis, who Miss Stanford had said

loved Grace Field, and whom Hatch suspected Miss Stanford loved. He found Willis a grim, sullen-faced young man of twenty-eight, who would say nothing.

From that point Hatch worked vigorously for several hours. At the end of that time he had found out that on Wednesday, the day of Miss Field's disappearance, a veiled woman—probably Grace Field—had called at the bank and inquired for Willis. Later, Willis, urging necessity, had asked to be allowed the day off and left the bank. He did not appear again until next morning. His actions did not impress any of his associates with the idea that he was a bridegroom; in fact, Hatch himself had given up the idea that Miss Field had eloped. There seemed no reason for an elopement.

When Hatch called at the studio, and home, of Constans St. George, to inform him of the disappearance of the model whose identity had been so long guarded, he was told that Mr. St. George was not in; that is, St. George refused to answer knocks at the door, and had not been seen for a day or so. He frequently disappeared this way, his informant said.

With these facts—and lack of facts—in his possession on Friday evening, Hatch called on Professor S. F. X. Van Dusen. The Thinking Machine received him as cordially as he ever received anybody.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"I don't believe this is really worth your while, Professor," Hatch said finally. "It's just a case of a girl who disappeared. There are some things about it which are puzzling, but I'm afraid it's only an elopement."

The Thinking Machine dragged up a footstool, planted his small feet on it comfortably and leaned back in his chair.

"Go on," he directed.

Then Hatch told the story, beginning at the time when the picture was placed in the art museum, and continuing up to the point where he had seen Willis after finding the photograph and the scrap of paper. He had always found that it saved time to begin at the beginning with The Thinking Machine; he did it now as a matter of course.

"And the scrap of paper?" asked The Thinking Machine.

"I have it here," replied the reporter.

For several minutes the scientist examined the fragment and then handed it back to the reporter.

"If one could establish some clear connection between that and the disappearance of the girl it might be valuable," he said. "As it is now, it means nothing. Any number of letters might be thrown into the waste-basket in the room the two girls occupied, therefore dismiss this for a moment."

"But isn't it possible—" Hatch began.

"Anything is possible, Mr. Hatch," retorted the other belligerently. "You might take occasion to see the handwriting of St. George, the artist, and see if that is his—also look at Willis's. Even if it were Willis's, however, it may mean nothing in connection with this."

"But what could have happened to Miss Field?"

"Any one of fifty things," responded the other. "She might have fallen dead in the street and been removed to a hospital or undertaking establishment; she might have been arrested for shoplifting and given a wrong name; she might

have gone mad and gone away; she might have eloped with another man; she might have committed suicide; she might have been murdered. The question is not what *could* have happened but what *did* happen."

"Yes, I thoroughly understand that," Hatch replied, with a slight smile. "But still I don't see—"

"Probably you don't," snapped the other. "We'll take it for granted that she did none of these things, with the possible exception of eloping, killing herself, or was murdered. You are convinced that she did not elope. Yet you have only run down one possible end of this—that is, the possibility of her elopement with Willis. You don't believe she did elope with him. Well, why not with St. George?"

"St. George?" gasped Hatch. "A great artist elope with a shop-girl?"

"She was his ideal in a picture which you say is one of the greatest in the world," replied the other, testily. "That being true, it is perfectly possible that she was his ideal for a wife, isn't it?"

The matter had not occurred to Hatch in just that light. He nodded his head, with a feeling of having been weighed and found wanting.

"Now, you say, too, that St. George has not been seen around his studio for a couple of days," said the scientist. "What is more possible than that they are together somewhere?"

"I see," said the reporter.

"It was understood, too, as I understand it, that St. George was in love with her," went on The Thinking Machine. "So I should imagine a solution of the mystery might be reached by taking St. George as the center of the affair. Suicide may be passed by for the moment, because she had no known motive for suicide—rather, if she loved Willis, she had every reason to live. Murder, too, may be passed for the moment—although there is a possibility that we might come back to that. Question St. George. He will listen if you make him, and then he must answer."

"But his place is all closed up," said Hatch. "It is supposed he is half crazy."

"Possibly he might be," said The Thinking Machine. "Or it is possible that he is keeping to his studio at work—or he might even be married to Miss Field and she might be there with him."

"Well, I see no way to ascertain definitely that he is there," said the reporter, and a puzzled wrinkle came into his face. "Of course I might remain on watch night and day to see if he comes out for food, or if anything to eat is sent in."

"That would take too long, and besides it might not happen at all," said The Thinking Machine. He arose and went into the adjoining room. He returned after a moment, and glanced at the clock on the mantel. "It is just nine o'clock now," he commented. "How long would it take you to get to the studio?"

"Half an hour."

"Well, go there now," directed the scientist. "If Mr. St. George is in his studio he will come out of it to-night at thirty-two minutes past nine. He will be running, and may not wear either a hat or coat."

"What?" and Hatch grinned, a weak puzzled grin.

"You wait where he can't see you

when he comes out," the scientist went on. "When he goes he may leave the door open. If he does, go in, see if you find any trace of Miss Field, and then, on his return, meet him at the outer door, ask him what you please, and come to see me to-morrow morning. He will be out of his studio about twenty minutes."

Vaguely Hatch felt that the scientist was talking rot, but he had seen this strange mind bring so many odd things to pass that he could not doubt this, even if it were absurd on its face.

"At thirty-two minutes past nine to-night," said the reporter, and he glanced at his watch.

"Come to see me to-morrow after you see the handwriting of Willis and St. George," directed the scientist. "Then you may also tell me just what happens to-night."

* * * *

Hatch was feeling like a fool. He was waiting in a darkened corner, just a few feet from St. George's studio. It was precisely half-past nine o'clock. He had been there for seven minutes. What strange power was to bring St. George, who for two days had denied himself to everyone, out of the studio if, indeed, he were there?

For the twentieth time Hatch glanced at his watch, which he had set with the little clock in The Thinking Machine's home. Slowly the minute hand crept around, to 9:31, 9:31½, and he heard the door of the studio rattle. Then suddenly it was thrown open and St. George appeared.

Without a glance to right or left, hatless and coatless, he rushed out of the building. Hatch got only a glimpse of his face; his lips were pressed tightly together; there was a glint of madness in his eyes. He jerked at the door once, then ran through the hall and disappeared down the stairs leading to the street. The studio door stood open behind him.

CHAPTER III

When the clatter of the running footsteps had died away and Hatch heard the outer door slam, he entered the studio, closing the door behind him. It was close here, and there was a breath of Chinese incense which was almost stifling. One quick glance by the light of an incandescent told Hatch that he stood in the reception-room. Typically, from floor to ceiling, the place was the abode of an artist; there was a rich gradation of color and everywhere were scraps of art and half-finished studies.

The reporter had given up the idea of solving the mystery of why St. George had so suddenly left his apartments; now he devoted himself to a quick, minute search of the place. He found nothing to interest him in the reception-room, and went on into the studio where the artist did his work.

Hatch glanced around quickly, his eyes taking in all the details, then went to a little table which stood, half-covered with newspapers. He turned these over, then bent forward suddenly and picked up—a woman's glove. Beside it lay its mate. He stuffed them into his pocket.

Eagerly he sought now for anything that might come to hand. At last he reached another door, leading into the bedroom. Here on a large table was a chafing dish, many dishes which had not

been washed, and all the other evidences of a careless man who did a great deal of his own cooking. There was a dresser here, too, a gorgeous, mahogany affair. Hatch didn't stop to admire this because his eye was attracted by a woman's veil which lay on it. He thrust it into his pocket.

"Quite a haul I'm making," he mused, grimly.

From this room a door, half open, led into a bathroom. Hatch merely glanced in, then looked at his watch. Fifteen minutes had elapsed. He must get out, and he started for the outer door. As he opened it quietly and stepped into the hall he heard the street door open one flight below, and started down the steps. There, half way, he met St. George.

"Mr. St. George?" he asked.

"No," was the reply.

Hatch knew his man perfectly, because he had seen him half a dozen times and had talked to him twice. The denial of identity therefore was futile.

"I came to tell you that Grace Field, the model for your 'Fullfillment,' has disappeared," Hatch went on, as the other glared at him.

"I don't care," snapped the other. He darted up the steps. Hatch listened until he heard the door of the studio close.

It was ten minutes to ten o'clock when Hatch left the building. Now he would see Miss Stanford and have her identify the gloves and the veil. He boarded a car and drew out and closely examined the gloves and veil. The gloves were tan, rather heavy, but small, and the veil was of some light, cobwebby material which he didn't know by name.

"If these are Grace Field's," the reporter argued, to himself, "it means something. If they are not, I'm simply a burglar."

There was a light in the Dorchester house where Miss Stanford lived, and the reporter rang the bell. A servant appeared.

"Would it be possible for me to see Miss Stanford for just a moment?" he asked.

"If she has not gone to bed."

He was ushered into the little parlor again. The servant disappeared, and after a moment Miss Stanford came in.

"I hated to trouble you so late," said the reporter, and she smiled at him frankly, "but I would like to ask if you have ever seen these?

He laid in her hands the gloves and the veil. Miss Stanford studied them carefully and her hands trembled.

"The gloves, I know, are Grace's—the veil I am not so positive about," she replied.

Hatch felt a great wave of exultation sweep over him, and it stopped his tongue for an instant.

"Did you—did you find them in Mr. Willis's possession?" asked the girl.

"I am not at liberty to tell just where I found them," Hatch replied. "If they are Miss Field's—and you can swear to that, I suppose—it may mean that we have a clew."

"Oh, I was afraid it would be this way," gasped the girl, and she sank down weeping on the couch.

"Knew what would be which way?" asked Hatch, puzzled.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she sobbed.

"Is there anything to connect Mr. Willis directly with the—*the murder?*"

The reporter started to say something, then paused. He wasn't quite sure of himself. He had uncovered something, he didn't know what yet.

"It would be better, Miss Stanford," he explained, gently, "if you would tell me all you know about this affair. The things which are now in my possession are fragmentary—if you could give me any new detail it would be only serving the ends of justice."

For a little while the girl was silent, then she arose and faced him.

"Is Mr. Willis yet under arrest?" she asked, calmly now.

"Not yet," said the reporter.

"Then I will say nothing else," she declared, and her lips closed in a straight line.

"What was the motive for murder?" Hatch insisted.

"I will say nothing else," she replied, firmly.

"And what makes you positive there was a murder?"

"Good-night. You need not come again, for I will not see you."

Miss Stanford turned and left the room.

Hatch, sadly puzzled, bewildered, stood staring after her a moment, then went out, his brain alive with possibilities, with intangible ends which would not be connected. He was eager to lay the new facts before The Thinking Machine.

From Dorchester the reporter took a car for his home. In his room, with the tangible threads of the mystery spread out on a table, he thought and surmised far into the night, and when he finally replaced them all in his pocket and turned down the light it was with a hopeless shake of his head.

On the following morning when Hatch arose he picked up a paper and went to breakfast. He spread the paper before him and there—the first thing he saw—was a huge headline, stating that a burglar had entered the room of Constans St. George and had tried to kill Mr. St. George. A shot had been fired at him and had passed through his left arm.

Mr. St. George had been asleep when the door of his apartments was burst in by the thief. The artist arose at the noise, and as he stepped into the reception-room had been shot. The wound was trivial. The burglar escaped; there was no clew.

CHAPTER IV

It was a long story of seemingly hopeless complications that Hatch told The Thinking Machine that morning. Nothing connected with anything, and yet here was a series of happenings, all apparently growing out of the disappearance of Miss Field, and which must have some relation one to the other. At the conclusion of the story, Hatch passed over the newspaper containing the account of the burglary in the studio. The artist had been removed to the hospital.

The Thinking Machine read the newspaper account and turned to the reporter with a question:

"Did you see Willis's handwriting?"

"Not yet," replied the reporter.

"See it at once," instructed the other. "If possible, bring me a sample of it. Did you see St. George's handwriting?"

"No," the reporter confessed.

"See that and bring me a sample if you can. Find out first if Willis has a revolver now or has ever had. If so, see it and see if it is loaded or empty—its exact condition. Find out also if St. George has a revolver—and if he has one, get possession of it if it is in your power."

The scientist twisted the two gloves and the veil which Hatch had given to him in his fingers idly, then passed them to the reporter again.

Hatch arose and stood waiting, hat in hand.

"Also find out," The Thinking Machine went on, "the exact condition of St. George—his mental condition particularly. Find out if Willis is at his office in the bank to-day, and, if possible, where and how he spent last night. That's all."

"And Miss Stanford?" asked Hatch.

"Never mind her," replied The Thinking Machine. "I may see her myself. These other things are of immediate consequence. The minute you satisfy yourself come back to me. Quickness on your part may prevent a tragedy."

The reporter went away hurriedly. At four o'clock that afternoon he returned. The Thinking Machine greeted him; he held a piece of letter-paper in his hand.

"Well?" he asked.

"The handwriting is Willis's," said Hatch, without hesitation. "I saw a sample—it is identical, and the paper on which he writes is identical."

The scientist grunted.

"I also saw some of St. George's writing," the reporter went on, as if he were reciting a lesson. "It is wholly dissimilar."

The Thinking Machine nodded.

"Willis has no revolver that anyone ever heard of," Hatch continued. "He was at dinner with several of his fellow employees last night, and left the restaurant at eight o'clock."

"Been drinking?"

"Might have had a few drinks," responded the reporter. "He is not a drinking man."

"Has St. George a revolver?"

"I was unable to find that out or do anything except get a sample of his writing from another artist," the reporter explained. "He is in a hospital, raving crazy. It seems to be a return of the trouble he had once before, except it is worse. The wound itself is not bad."

The scientist was studying the sheet of paper.

"Have you that scrap?" he asked.

Hatch produced it, and the scientist placed it on the sheet; Hatch could only conjecture that he was fitting it to something else already there. He was engaged in this work when Martha entered.

"The young lady who was here earlier to-day wants to see you again," she announced.

"Show her in," directed The Thinking Machine, without raising his eyes.

Martha disappeared, and after a moment Miss Stanford entered. Hatch, himself unnoticed, stared at her curiously, and arose, as did the scientist. The girl's face was flushed a little, and there was an eager expression in her eyes.

"I know he didn't do it," she began. "I've just gotten a letter from Spring-

field stating that he was there on the day Grace went away—and—"

"Know who didn't do what?" asked the scientist.

"That Mr. Willis didn't kill Grace," replied the girl, her enthusiasm suddenly checked. "See here."

The scientist read a letter which she offered, and the girl sank into a chair. Then for the first time she saw Hatch and her eyes expressed her surprise. She stared at him a moment, then nodded a greeting, after which she fell to watching The Thinking Machine.

"Miss Stanford," he said at length, "you made several mistakes when you were here before in not telling me the truth—all of it. If you will tell me all you know of this case I may be able to see it more clearly."

The girl reddened and stammered a little, then her lips trembled.

"Do you *know*—not conjecture, but *know*—whether or not Miss Field, or Grace, as you call her, was engaged to Willis?" the irritated voice asked.

"I—I know it, yes," she stammered.

"And you were in love with Mr. Willis—you *are* in love with him?"

Again the tell-tale blush swept over her face. She glanced at Hatch; it was the nervousness of a girl who is driven to a confession of love.

"I regard Mr. Willis very highly," she said, finally, her voice low.

"Well," and the scientist arose and crossed to where the girl sat, "don't you see that a very grave charge might be brought home to you if you don't tell all of this? The girl has disappeared. There might be even a hint of murder in which your name would be mentioned. Don't you see?"

There was a long pause, and the girl stared steadily into the squint eyes above her. Finally her eyes fell.

"I think I understand. Just what is it you want me to answer?"

"Did or did you not ever hear Mr. Willis threaten Miss Field?"

"I did once, yes."

"Did or did you not know that Miss Field was the original of the painting?"

"I did not."

"It is a semi-nude picture, isn't it?"

Again there was a flush in the girl's face.

"I have heard it was," she said. "I have never seen it. I suggested to Grace several times that we go to see it, but she never would. I understand why now."

"Did Willis know she was the original of that painting? That is, knowing it yourself now, do you have any reason to suppose that he previously knew?"

"I don't know," she said frankly. "I know that there was something which was always causing friction between them—something they quarreled about. It might have been that. That was when I heard Mr. Willis threaten her—it was something about shooting her if she ever did something—I don't know what."

"Miss Field knew him before you did, I think you said?"

"She introduced me to him."

The Thinking Machine fingered the sheet of paper he held.

"Did you know what those scraps of paper you brought me contained?"

"Yes, in a way," said the girl.

"Why did you bring them, then?"

"Because you told me you knew I had them, and I was afraid it might

make more trouble for me and for Mr. Willis if I did not."

The Thinking Machine passed the sheet to Hatch.

"This will interest you, Mr. Hatch," he explained. "Those words and letters in parentheses are what I have supplied to complete the full text of the note, of which you had a mere scrap. You will notice how the scrap you had fitted into it."

The reporter read this:

"If you go to th(at stud)io Wednesday to see that artist, (I will k)ill you bec(ause I w)on't have it known to the world tha(t you a)re a model. I hope you will heed his warning.

"V. W."

The reporter stared at the patched-up letter, pasted together with infinite care, and then glanced at The Thinking Machine, who settled himself again comfortably in the chair.

"And now, Miss Stanford," asked the scientist, in a most matter-of-fact tone, "where is the body of Miss Field?"

CHAPTER V

THE blunt question aroused the girl, and she arose suddenly, staring at The Thinking Machine. He did not move. She stood as if transfixed, and Hatch saw her bosom rise and fall rapidly with the emotion she was seeking to repress.

"Well?" asked The Thinking Machine.

"I don't know," flamed Miss Stanford, suddenly, almost fiercely. "I don't even know she is dead. I know that Mr. Willis did not kill her, because, as that letter I gave you shows, he was in Springfield. I won't be tricked into saying anything further."

The outburst had no appreciable effect on The Thinking Machine beyond causing him to raise his eyebrows slightly as he looked at the defiant little figure.

"When did you last see Mr. Willis have a revolver?"

"I know nothing of any revolver. I know only that Victor Willis is innocent as you are, and that I love him. Whatever has become of Grace Field I don't know."

Tears leaped suddenly to her eyes, turning, she left the room. After a moment they heard the outer door slam as she passed out. Hatch turned to the scientist with a question in his eyes.

"Did you smell anything like chloroform or ether when you were in St. George's apartments?" asked The Thinking Machine as he arose.

"No," said Hatch. "I only noticed that the place seemed close, and there was an odor of Chinese incense—joss sticks—which was almost stifling."

The Thinking Machine looked at the reporter quickly, but said nothing. Instead, he passed out of the room, to return a few minutes later with his hat and coat on.

"Where are we going?" asked Hatch.

"To St. George's studio," was the answer.

Just then the telephone bell in the next room rang. The scientist answered it in person.

"Your City Editor," he called to Hatch.

Hatch went to the 'phone and remained there several minutes. When

he came back there was a new excitement in his face.

"What is it?" asked the scientist.

"Another queer thing my City Editor told me," Hatch responded. "Constans St. George, raving mad, has escaped from the hospital and disappeared."

"Dear me, dear me!" exclaimed the scientist, quickly. It was as near surprise as he ever showed. "Then there is danger."

With quick steps he went to the telephone and called up Police Headquarters.

"Detective Mallory," Hatch heard him ask for. "Yes. This is Professor Van Dusen. Please meet me immediately here at my house. Be here in ten minutes? Good. I'll wait. It's a matter of great importance. Good-by."

Then impatiently The Thinking Machine moved about, waiting. The reporter, whose acquaintance with the logician was an extended one, had never seen him in just such a state. It started when he heard St. George had escaped.

At last they left the house and stood waiting on the steps until Detective Mallory appeared in a cab. Into that Hatch and The Thinking Machine climbed, after the latter had given some direction, and the cabby drove rapidly away. It was all a mystery to Hatch, and he was rather glad of it when Detective Mallory asked what it meant.

"Means that there is danger of a tragedy," said The Thinking Machine, crustily. "We may be in time to avert it. There is just a chance. If I'd only known this an hour ago—even half an hour ago—it might have been stopped."

The Thinking Machine was the first man out of the cab when it stopped, and Hatch and the detective followed quickly.

"Is Mr. St. George in his apartments?" asked the scientist of the elevator boy.

"No, sir," said the boy. "He's in hospital, shot."

"Is there a key to his place? Quick."

"I think so, sir, but I can't give it to you."

"Here, give it to me, then!" exclaimed the detective. He flashed a badge in the boy's eyes, and the youth immediately lost a deal of his coolness.

"Gee, a detective! Yes, sir."

"How many rooms has Mr. St. George?" asked the scientist.

"Three and a bath," the boy responded.

Two minutes later the three men stood in the reception-room of the apartments. There came to them from somewhere inside a deadly, stifling odor of chloroform. After one glance around The Thinking Machine rushed into the next room, the studio.

"Dear me, dear me!" he exclaimed.

There on the floor lay huddled the figure of a man. Blood had run from several wounds on his head. The Thinking Machine stopped a moment, and his slender fingers fumbled over the heart.

"Unconscious, that's all," he said, and he raised the man up.

"Victor Willis!" exclaimed Hatch.

"Victor Willis!" repeated The Thinking Machine, as if puzzled. "Are you sure?"

"Certain," said Hatch, positively. "It's the bank clerk."

"Then we are too late," declared the scientist.

He arose and looked about the room. A door to his right attracted his attention. He jerked it open and peered in. It was a clothes press. Another small door on the other side of the room was also thrown open. Here was a kitchenette with a great quantity of canned stuffs.

The Thinking Machine went on into the little bedroom which Hatch had searched. He flung open the bathroom and peered in, only to shut it immediately. Then he tried the handle of another door, a closet. It was fastened.

"Ah!" he exclaimed.

Then on his hands and knees he sniffed at the crack between the door and the flooring. Suddenly, as if satisfied, he arose and stepped away from the door.

"Smash that door in," he directed.

Detective Mallory looked at him stupefied. There was a similar expression on Hatch's face.

"What's—what's in there?" the detective asked.

"Smash it," said the other, tartly. "Smash it, or God knows what you'll find in there."

The detective, a powerful man, and Hatch threw their weight against the door; it stood rigid. They pulled at the handle; it refused to yield.

"Lend me your revolver?" asked The Thinking Machine.

The weapon was in his hand almost before the detective was aware of it, and, placing the barrel to the keyhole, The Thinking Machine pulled the trigger. There was a resonant report, the lock was smashed and the detective put out his hand to open the door.

"Look out for a shot," warned The Thinking Machine, sharply.

CHAPTER VI

THE Thinking Machine drew Detective Mallory and Hatch to one side, out of immediate range of any person who might rush out, then pulled the closet door open. A cloud of suffocating fumes—the sweet, sickening odor of chloroform—gushed out, but there was no sound from inside. The detective looked at The Thinking Machine inquiringly.

Carefully, almost gingerly, the scientist peered around the edge of the door. What he saw did not startle him, because it was what he expected. It was Constans St. George lying prone on the floor as if dead, with a blood-spattered revolver clasped loosely in one hand; the other hand grasped the throat of a woman, a woman of superb physical beauty, who also lay with face upturned, staring glassily.

"Open the windows—all of them, then help me," commanded the scientist.

As Detective Mallory and Hatch turned to obey the instructions, The Thinking Machine took the revolver from the inert fingers of the artist. Then Hatch and Mallory returned and together they lifted the unconscious forms toward a window.

"It's Grace Field," said the reporter.

In silence for half an hour the scientist labored over the unconscious forms of his three patients. The detective and reporter stood by, doing what they were told to do. The wind, cold and stinging, came pouring through the windows, and it was only a few minutes until the chloroform odor was dissipated. The first of the three unconscious ones to show any sign of returning comprehen-

sion was Victor Willis, whose presence at all in the apartments furnished one of the mysteries which Hatch could not fathom.

It was evident that his condition was primarily due to the wounds on his head—two of which bled profusely. The chloroform had merely served to further deaden his mentality. The wounds were made with the butt of the revolver, evidently in the hands of the artist. Willis's eyes opened finally and he stared at the faces bending over him with uncomprehending eyes.

"What happened?" he asked.

"You're all right now," was the scientist's assuring answer. "This man is your prisoner, Detective Mallory, for breaking and entering and for the attempted murder of Mr. St. George."

Detective Mallory was delighted. Here was something he could readily understand; a human being given over to his care; a tangible thing to put handcuffs on and hold. He immediately proceeded to put the handcuffs on.

"Any need of an ambulance?" he asked.

"No," replied The Thinking Machine. "He'll be all right in half an hour."

Gradually as reason came back Willis remembered. He turned his head at last and saw the inert bodies of St. George and Grace Field, the girl whom he had loved.

"She was here, then!" he exclaimed suddenly, violently. "I knew it. Is she dead?"

"Shut up that young fool's mouth, Mr. Mallory," commanded the scientist, sharply. "Take him in the other room or send him away."

Obediently Mallory did as directed; there was that in the voice of this cold, calm being, The Thinking Machine, which compelled obedience. Mallory never questioned motives or orders.

Willis was able to walk to the other room with help. Miss Field and St. George lay side by side in the cold wind from the open window. The Thinking Machine had forced a little whisky down their throats, and after a time St. George opened his eyes.

The artist was instantly alert and tried to rise. He was weak, however, and even a strength given to him by the madness which blazed in his eyes did not avail. At last he lay raving, cursing, shrieking. The Thinking Machine regarded him closely.

"Hopeless," he said, at last.

Again for many minutes the scientist worked with the girl. Finally he asked that an ambulance be sent for. The detective called up the City Hospital on the telephone in the apartments and made the request. The Thinking Machine stared alternately at the girl and at the artist.

"Hopeless," he said again. "St. George, I mean."

"Will the girl recover?" asked Hatch.

"I don't know," was the frank reply. "She's been partly stupefied for days—ever since she disappeared, as a matter of fact. If her physical condition was as good as her appearance indicates she may recover. Now the hospital is the best place for her."

It was only a few minutes before two ambulances came and the three persons were taken away; Willis a prisoner, and a sullen, defiant prisoner, who refused to speak or answer questions; St. George raving hideously and cursing frightfully;

the woman, beautiful as a marble statue, and colorless as death.

When they had all gone, The Thinking Machine went back into the bedroom and examined more carefully the little closet in which he had found the artist and Grace Field. It was practically a padded cell, relatively six feet each way. Heavy cushion of felt two or three inches thick covered the interior of the little room closely. In the top of it there was a small aperture, which had permitted some of the fumes of the chloroform to escape. The place was saturated with the poison.

"Let's go," he said, finally.

Detective Mallory and Hatch followed him out and a few minutes later sat opposite him in his little laboratory. Hatch had told a story over the telephone that made his City Editor rejoice madly; it was news, great, big, vital news.

"Now, Mr. Hatch, I suppose you want some details," said The Thinking Machine, as he relapsed into his accustomed attitude. "And you, too, Mr. Mallory, since you are holding Willis a prisoner on my say-so. Would you like to know why?"

"Sure," said the detective.

"Let's go back a little—begin at the beginning, where Mr. Hatch called on me," said The Thinking Machine. "I can make the matter clearer that way. And I believe the cause of justice, Mr. Mallory, requires absolute accuracy and clarity in all things, does it not?"

"Sure," said the detective again.

"Well, Mr. Hatch told me at some length of the preliminaries of this case," explained The Thinking Machine. "He told me the history of the picture; the mystery as to the identity of the model; her great beauty; how he found her to be Grace Field, a shop-girl. He also told me of the mental condition of the artist, St. George, and repeated the rumor as he knew it about the artist being heartbroken because the girl—his model—would not marry him.

"All this brought the artist into the matter of the girl's disappearance. She represented to him, physically, the highest ideal of which he could conceive—hope, success, life itself. Therefore it was not astonishing that he should fall in love with her; and it is not difficult to imagine that the girl did not fall in love with him. She is a beautiful woman, but not necessarily a woman of mentality; he is a great artist, eccentric, childish even in certain things. They were two natures totally opposed.

"These things I could see instantly. Mr. Hatch showed me the photograph and also the scrap of paper. At the time the scrap of paper meant nothing. As I pointed out, it might have no bearing at all, yet it made it necessary for me to know whose handwriting it was. If Willis's, it still might mean nothing; if St. George's, a great deal, because it showed a direct thread to him. There was reason to believe that any friendship between them had ended when the picture was exhibited.

"It was necessary, therefore, even that early in the work of reducing the mystery to logic to center it about St. George. This I explained to Mr. Hatch and pointed out the fact that the girl and the artist might have eloped—were possibly together somewhere. First it was necessary to get to the artist; Mr. Hatch had not been able to do so.

"A childishly simple trick, which seemed to amaze Mr. Hatch considerably, brought the artist out of his rooms after he had been there closely for two days. I told Mr. Hatch that the artist would leave his rooms, if he were there, one night at 9:32, and told him to wait in the hall, then if he left the door open to enter the apartments and search for some trace of the girl. Mr. St. George did leave his apartments at the time I mentioned, and—"

"But why, how?" asked Hatch.

"There was one thing in the world that St. George loved with all his heart," explained the scientist. "That was his picture. Every act of his life has demonstrated that. I looked at a telephone book; I found he had a 'phone. If he were in his rooms, locked in, it was a bit of common sense that his telephone was the best means of reaching him. He answered the 'phone; I told him, just at 9:30, that the Art Museum was on fire and his picture in danger.

"St. George left his apartments to go and see, just as I knew he would, hatless and coatless, and leaving the door open. Mr. Hatch went inside and found two gloves and a veil, all belonging to Miss Field. Miss Stanford identified them and asked if he had gotten them from Willis, and if Willis had been arrested. Why did she ask these questions? Obviously because she knew, or thought she knew, that Willis had some connection with the affair.

"Mr. Hatch detailed all his discoveries and the conversation with Miss Stanford to me on the day after I 'phoned to St. George, who of course, had found no fire. It showed that Miss Stanford suspected Willis, whom she loved, of the murder of Miss Field. Why? Because she had heard him threaten. He's a hare-brained young fool, anyway. What motive? Jealousy. Jealousy of what? He knew in some way that she had posed for a semi-nude picture, and that the man who painted it loved her. There is your jealousy. It explains Willis's every act."

The Thinking Machine paused a moment, then went on:

"This conversation with Mr. Hatch made me believe Miss Stanford knew more than she was willing to tell. In what way? By a letter? Possibly. She had given Mr. Hatch a scrap of a letter; perhaps she had found another letter, or more of this. I sent her a note, telling her I knew she had these scraps of letters, and she promptly brought them to me. She had found them after Mr. Hatch saw her first somewhere in the house—in a bureau drawer she said, I think.

"Meanwhile, Mr. Hatch had called my attention to the burglary of St. George's apartments. One reading of that convinced me that it was Willis who did this. Why? Because burglars don't burst in doors when they think anyone is inside; they pick the lock. Knowing, too, Willis's insane jealousy, I figured that he would be the type of man who would go there to kill St. George if he could, particularly if he thought the girl was there.

"Thus it happened that I was not the only one to think that St. George knew where the girl was. Willis, the one most interested, thought she was there. I questioned Miss Stanford mercilessly, trying to get more facts about the young

man from her which would bear on this, trying to trick her into some statement, but she was loyal to the last.

"All these things indicated several things. First, that Willis didn't actually know where the girl was, as he would have known had he killed her; second, that if she had disappeared with a man, it was St. George, as there was no other apparent possibility; third, that St. George would be with her or near her, even if he had killed her; fourth, the pistol shot through the arm had brought on again a mental condition which threatened his entire future, and now as it happens has blighted it.

"Thus, Miss Field and St. George were together. She loved Willis devotedly, therefore she was with St. George against her will, or she was dead. Where? In his rooms? Possibly. I determined to search there. I had just reached this determination when I heard St. George, violently insane, had escaped from the hospital. He had only one purpose then—to get to the woman. Then she was in danger.

"I reasoned along these lines, rushed to the artist's apartments, found Willis there wounded. He had evidently been there searching when St. George returned, and St. George had attacked him, as a madman will, and with the greater strength of a madman. Then I knew the madman's first step. It would be the end of everything for him; therefore the death of the girl and his own. How? By poison preferably, because he would not shoot her—he loved beauty too much. Where? Possibly in the place where she had been all along, the closet, carefully padded and prepared to withstand noises. It is really a padded cell. I have an idea that the artist, sometimes overcome by his insane fits, and knowing when they would come, prepared this closet and used it himself occasionally. Here the girl could have been kept and her shrieks would never have been heard. You know the rest."

The Thinking Machine stopped and arose, as if to end the matter. The others arose, too.

"I took you, Mr. Mallory, because you were a detective, and I knew I could force a way into the apartments which I imagined would be locked. I think that's all."

"But how did the girl get there?" asked Hatch.

"St. George evidently asked her to come, possibly to pose again. It was a gratification to the girl to do this—a little touch of vanity that Willis was fighting so hard, and which led to his threats and his efforts to kill St. George. Of course the artist was insane when she came; his frantic love for her led him to make her a prisoner and hold her against her will. You saw how well he did it."

There was an awed pause. Hatch was rubbing the nap of his hat against his sleeve, thoughfully. Detective Mallory had nothing to say; it was all said. Both turned as if to go, but the reporter had two more questions.

"I suppose St. George's case is hopeless?"

"Absolutely. It will end in a few months with his death."

"And Miss Field?"

"If she is not dead by this time she will recover. Wait a minute." He went into the next room and they heard

the telephone jingle. After a time he came out. "She will recover," he said. "Good-afternoon."

Wonderingly, Hutchinson Hatch, reporter, and Detective Mallory passed down the street together.

Lodging for the Night

A Story of Francis Villon.

It was late in November 1456. The snow fell over Paris with rigorous, relentless persistence; sometimes the wind made a sally and scattered it in flying vortices; sometimes there was a lull, and flake after flake descended out of the black night air, silent, circuitous, interminable. To poor people, looking up under moist eyebrows, it seemed a wonder where it all came from. Master Francis Villon had propounded an alternative that afternoon, at a tavern window: was it only Pagan Jupiter plucking geese upon Olympus? or were the holy angels moulting? He was only a poor Master of Arts, he went on; and as the question somewhat touched upon divinity, he durst not venture to conclude. A silly old priest from Montargis, who was among the company, treated the young rascal to a bottle of wine in honour of the jest and the grimaces with which it was accompanied, and swore on his own white beard that he had been just such another irreverent dog when he was Villon's age.

The air was raw and pointed, but not far below freezing; and the flakes were large, damp, and adhesive. The whole city was sheeted up. An army might have marched from end to end and not a footfall given the alarm. If there were any belated birds in heaven, they saw the island like a large white patch, and the bridges like slim white spars on the black ground of the river. High up overhead the snow settled among the tracery of the cathedral towers. Many a niche was drifted full; many a statue wore a long white bonnet on its grotesque or sainted head. The gargoyles had been transformed into great false noses, drooping towards the point. The crockets were like upright pillows swollen on one side. In the intervals of the wind, there was a dull sound of dripping about the precincts of the church.

The cemetery of St. John had taken its own share of the snow. All the graves were decently covered; tall white housetops stood around in grave array; worthy burghers were long ago in bed, benightcapped like their domiciles; there was no light in all the neighbourhood but a little peep from a lamp that hung swinging in the church choir, and tossed the shadows to and fro in time to its oscillations. The clock was hard on ten when the patrol went by with halberts and a lantern, beating their hands; and they saw nothing suspicious about the cemetery of St. John.

Yet there was a small house, backed up against the cemetery wall, which was still awake, and awake to evil purpose, in that snoring district. There was not much to betray it from without; only a stream of warm vapour from the chimney-top, a patch where the snow melted on the roof, and a few half-obliterated footprints at the door. But within, behind the shuttered windows, Master Francis Villon the poet, and some of the thievist crew with whom he consorted, were keeping the night alive and passing round the bottle.

A great pile of living embers diffused a strong and ruddy glow from the arched chimney. Before this straddled Dom Nicolas, the Picardy monk, with his skirts picked up and his fat legs bared to the comfortable warmth. His dilated shadow cut the room in half; and the fire light only escaped on either side of his broad person, and in a little pool between his outspread feet. His face had the beery, bruised appearance of the continued drinker's; it was covered with a network of congested veins, purple in ordinary circumstances, but now pale violet, for even with his back to the fire the cold pinched him on the other side. His cowl had half fallen on either side of his bull neck. So he straddled, grumbling, and cut the room in half with the shadow of his portly frame.

On the right, Villon and Guy Tabary were huddled together over a scrap of parchment; Villon making a ballade which he was to call the "Ballade of Roast Fish," and Tabary spluttering admiration at his shoulder. The poet was a rag of a man, dark, little, and lean, with hollow cheeks and thin black locks. He carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish animation. Greed had made folds about his eyes, evil smiles had puckered his mouth. The wolf and pig struggled together in his face. It was an eloquent, sharp, ugly, earthly countenance. His hands were small and prehensile, with fingers knotted like a cord; and they were continually flickering in front of him in violent and expressive pantomime. As for Tabary, a broad, complacent, admiring imbecility breathed from his squash nose and slobbering lips; he had become a thief, just as he might have become the most decent of burgesses, by the imperious chance that rules the lives of human geese and human donkeys.

At the monk's other hand, Montigny and Thevenin Pensete played a game of chance. About the first there clung some flavour of good birth and training, as about a fallen angel; something long, lithe, and courtly in the person; something aquiline and darkling in the face. Thevenin, poor soul, was in great feather; he had done a good stroke of knavery that afternoon in the Faubourg St. Jacques, and all night he had been gaining from Montigny. A flat smile illuminated his face; his bald head shone rosily in a garland of red curls; his little protuberant stomach shook with silent chucklings as he swept in his gains.

"Doubles or quits?" said Thevenin.

Montigny nodded grimly.

"Some may prefer to dine in state," wrote Villon, *"On bread and cheese on silver plate.* Or—or—help me out, Guido!"

Tabary giggled.

"Or parsley on a golden dish," scribbled the poet.

The wind was freshening without; it

drove the snow before it, and sometimes raised its voice in a victorious whoop, and made sepulchral grumblings in the chimney. The cold was growing sharper as the night went on. Villon, protruding his lips, imitated the gust with something between a whistle and a groan. It was an eerie, uncomfortable talent of the poet's, much detested by the Picardy monk.

"Can't you hear it rattle in the gibbet?" said Villon. "They are all dancing the devil's jig on nothing, up there. You may dance, my gallants, you'll be none the warmer! Whew! what a gust! Down went somebody just now! A medlar the fewer on the three-legged medlar-tree!—I say, Dom Nicolas, it'll be cold to-night on the St. Denis Road?" he asked.

Dom Nicolas winked both his big eyes, and seemed to choke upon his Adam's apple. Montfaucon, the great grisly Paris gibbet, stood hard by the St. Denis Road, and the pleasantry touched him on the raw. As for Tabary, he laughed immoderately over the medlars; he had never heard anything more light-hearted; and he held his sides and crowed. Villon fetched him a fillip on the nose, which turned his mirth into an attack of coughing.

"Oh, stop that row," said Villon, "and think of rhymes to 'fish.' "

"Doubles or quits," said Montigny doggedly.

"With all my heart," quoth Thevenin.

"Is there any more in that bottle?" asked the monk.

"Open another," said Villon. "How do you ever hope to fill that big hogshead, your body, with little things like bottles? And how do you expect to get to heaven? How many angels, do you fancy, can be spared to carry up a single monk from Picardy? Or do you think yourself another Elias—and they'll send the coach for you?"

"*Hominibus impossibile*," replied the monk, as he filled his glass.

Tabary was in ecstasies.

Villon filliped his nose again.

"Laugh at my jokes, if you like," he said.

"It was very good," objected Tabary.

Villon made a face at him. "Think of rhymes to 'fish,' " he said. "What have you to do with Latin? You'll wish you knew none of it at the great assizes, when the devil calls for Guido Tabary, clericus—the devil with the hump-back and red-hot finger-nails. Talking of the devil," he added in a whisper, "look at Montigny!"

All three peered covertly at the gamester. He did not seem to be enjoying his luck. His mouth was a little to a side; one nostril nearly shut, and the other much inflated. The black dog was on his back, as people say, in terrifying nursery metaphor; and he breathed hard under the gruesome burden.

"He looks as if he could knife him," whispered Tabary, with round eyes.

The monk shuddered, and turned his face and spread his open hands to the red embers. It was the cold that thus affected Dom Nicolas, and not any excess of moral sensibility.

"Come now," said Villon—"about this ballade. How does it run so far?" And beating time with his hands, he read it aloud to Tabary.

They were interrupted at the fourth rhyme by a brief and fatal movement among the gamesters. The round was completed, and Thevenin was just open-

ing his mouth to claim another victory, when Montigny leaped up, swift as an adder, and stabbed him to the heart. The blow took effect before he had time to utter a crow, before he had time to move. A tremor or two convulsed his frame; his hands opened and shut, his heels rattled on the floor; then his head rolled backward over one shoulder with the eyes wide open; and Thevenin Pensete's spirit had returned to Him who made it.

Every one sprang to his feet; but the business was over in two twos. The four living fellows looked at each other in rather a ghastly fashion; the dead man contemplating a corner of the roof with a singular and ugly leer.

"My God!" said Tabary; and he began to pray in Latin.

Villon broke out into hysterical laughter. He came a step forward and ducked a ridiculous bow at Thevenin, and laughed still louder. Then he sat down suddenly, all of a heap, upon a stool, and continued laughing bitterly as though he would shake himself to pieces.

Montigny recovered his composure first.

"Let's see what he has about him," he remarked; and he picked the dead man's pockets with a practised hand, and divided the money into four equal portions on the table. "There's for you," he said.

The monk received his share with a deep sigh, and a single stealthy glance at the dead Thevenin, who was beginning to sink into himself and topple sideways off the chair.

"We're all in for it," cried Villon, swallowing his mirth. "It's a hanging job for every man jack of us that's here—not to speak of those who aren't." He made a shocking gesture in the air with his raised right hand, and put out his tongue and threw his head on one side, so as to counterfeit the appearance of one who has been hanged. Then he pocketed his share of the spoil, and executed a shuffle with his feet as if to restore the circulation.

Tabary was the last to help himself; he made a dash at the money, and retired to the other end of the apartment.

Montigny stuck Thevenin upright in the chair, and drew out the dagger, which was followed by a jet of blood.

"You fellows had better be moving," he said, as he wiped the blade on his victim's doublet.

"I think we had," returned Villon with a gulp. "Damn his fat head!" he broke out. "It sticks in my throat like phlegm. What right has a man to have red hair when he is dead?" And he fell all a heap again upon the stool, and fairly cövered his face with his hands.

Montigny and Dom Nicolas laughed aloud, even Tabary feebly chiming in.

"Cry baby," said the monk.

"I always said he was a woman," added Montigny with a sneer. "Sit up, can't you?" he went on, giving another shake to the murdered body. "Tread out that fire, Nick!"

But Nick was better employed; he was quietly taking Villon's purse, as the poet sat, limp and trembling, on the stool where he had been making a ballade not three minutes before. Montigny and Tabary dumbly demanded a share of the booty, which the monk silently promised as he passed the little bag into the bosom of his gown. In many ways an artistic nature unfits a man for practical existence.

No sooner had the theft been accomplished than Villon shook himself, jumped to his feet, and began helping to scatter and extinguish the embers. Meanwhile Montigny opened the door and cautiously peered into the street. The coast was clear; there was no meddlesome patrol in sight. Still it was judged wiser to slip out severally; and as Villon was himself in a hurry to escape from the neighbourhood of the dead Thevenin, and the rest were in a still greater hurry to get rid of him before he should discover the loss of his money, he was the first by general consent to issue forth into the street.

The wind had triumphed and swept all the clouds from heaven. Only a few vapours, as thin as moonlight, fleeting rapidly across the stars. It was bitter cold; and by a common optical effect, things seemed almost more definite than in the broadest daylight. The sleeping city was absolutely still: a company of white hoods, a field full of little Alps, below the twinkling stars. Villon cursed his fortune. Would it were still snowing! Now, wherever he went, he left an indelible trail behind him on the glittering streets; wherever he went he was still tethered to the house by the cemetery of St. John; wherever he went he must weave, with his own plodding feet, the rope that bound him to the crime and would bind him to the gallows. The leer of the dead man came back to him with a new significance. He snapped his fingers as if to pluck up his own spirits, and choosing a street at random, stepped boldly forward in the snow.

Two things preoccupied him as he went: the aspect of the gallows at Montfaucon in this bright windy phase of the night's existence, for one; and for another, the look of the dead man with his bald head and garland of red curls. Both struck cold upon his heart, and he kept quickening his pace as if he could escape from unpleasant thoughts by mere fleetness of foot. Sometimes he looked back over his shoulder with a sudden nervous perk; but he was the only moving thing in the white streets, except when the wind swooped round a corner and threw up the snow, which was beginning to freeze, in spouts of glittering dust.

Suddenly he saw, a long way before him, a black clump and a couple of lanterns. The clump was in motion, and the lanterns swung as though carried by men walking. It was a patrol. And though it was merely crossing his line of march, he judged it wiser to get out of eyeshot as speedily as he could. He was not in the humour to be challenged, and he was conscious of making a very conspicuous mark upon the snow. Just on his left hand there stood a great hotel, with some turrets and a large porch before the door; it was half-ruinous, he remembered and had long stood empty; and so he made three steps of it and jumped into the shelter of the porch. It was pretty dark inside aft - the glimmer of the snowy streets, and he was groping forward with outspread hands, when he stumbled over some substance which offered an indescribable mixture of resistance, hard and soft, firm and loose. His heart gave a leap, and he sprang two steps back and stared dreadfully at the obstacle. Then he gave a little laugh of relief. It was only a woman, and she dead. He knelt beside her to make sure upon this latter point. She was freezing cold, and rigid

like a stick. A little ragged finery fluttered in the wind about her hair, and her cheeks had been heavily rouged that same afternoon. Her pockets were quite empty; but in her stocking, underneath the garter, Villon found two of the small coins that went by the name of whites. It was little enough; but it was always something; and the poet was moved with a deep sense of pathos that she should have died before she had spent her money. That seemed to him a dark and pitiable mystery; and he looked from the coins in his hand to the dead woman, and back again to the coins, shaking his head over the riddle of man's life. Henry V. of England, dying at Vincennes just after he had conquered France, and this poor jade cut off by a cold draught in a great man's doorway, before she had time to spend her couple of whites—it seemed a cruel way to carry on the world. Two whites would have taken such a little while to squander; and yet it would have been one more good taste in the mouth, one more smack of the lips, before the devil got the soul, and the body was left to birds and vermin. He would like to use all his tallow before the light was blown out and the lantern broken.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he was feeling, half mechanically, for his purse. Suddenly his heart stopped beating; a feeling of cold scales passed up the back of his legs, and a cold blow seemed to fall upon his scalp. He stood petrified for a moment; then he felt again with one feverish movement; and then his loss burst upon him, and he was covered at once with perspiration. To spendthrifts money is so living and actual—it is such a thin veil between them and their pleasures! There is only one limit to their fortune—that of time; and a spendthrift with only a few crowns is the Emperor of Rome until they are spent. For such a person to lose his money is to suffer the most shocking reverse, and fall from heaven to hell, from all to nothing, in a breath. And all the more if he has put his head in the halter for it; if he may be hanged to-morrow for that same purse, so dearly earned, so foolishly departed! Villon stood and cursed; he threw the two whites into the street; he shook his fist at heaven; he stamped, and was not horrified to find himself trampling the poor corpse. Then he began rapidly to retrace his steps towards the house beside the cemetery. He had forgotten all fear of the patrol, which was long gone by at any rate, and had no idea but that of his lost purse. It was in vain that he looked right and left upon the snow: nothing was to be seen. He had not dropped it in the streets. Had it fallen in the house? He would have liked dearly to go in and see; but the idea of the grisly occupant unmanned him. And he saw besides, as he drew near, that their efforts to put out the fire had been unsuccessful; on the contrary, it had broken into a blaze, and a changeful light played in the chinks of door and window, and revived his terror for the authorities and Paris gibbet.

He returned to the hotel with the porch, and groped about upon the snow for the money he had thrown away in his childish passion. But he could only find one white; the other had probably struck sideways and sunk deeply in. With a single white in his pocket, all his projects for a rousing night in some wild tavern vanished utterly away. And

it was not only pleasure that fled laughing from his grasp; positive discomfort, positive pain, attacked him as he stood ruefully before the porch. His perspiration had dried upon him; and though the wind had now fallen, a binding frost was setting in stronger with every hour, and he felt benumbed and sick at heart. What was to be done? Late as was the hour, improbable as was success, he would try the house of his adopted father, the chaplain of St. Benoit.

He ran there all the way, and knocked timidly. There was no answer. He knocked again and again, taking heart with every stroke; and at last steps were heard approaching from within. A barred wicket fell open in the iron-studded door, and emitted a gush of yellow light.

"Hold up your face to the wicket," said the chaplain from within.

"It's only me," whimpered Villon.

"Oh, it's only you, is it?" returned the chaplain; and he cursed him with foul unpriestly oaths for disturbing him at such an hour, and made him be off to hell, where he came from.

"My hands are blue to the wrist," pleaded Villon; "my feet are dead and full of twinges; my nose aches with the sharp air; the cold lies at my heart. I may be dead before morning. Only this once, father, and before God I will never ask again!"

"You should have come earlier," said the ecclesiastic coolly. "Young men require a lesson now and then." He shut the wicket and retired deliberately into the interior of the house.

Villon was beside himself; he beat upon the door with his hands and feet, and shouted hoarsely after the chaplain.

"Wormy old fox!" he cried. "If I had my hand under your twist, I would send you flying headlong into the bottomless pit."

A door shut in the interior, faintly audible to the poet down long passages. He passed his hand over his mouth with an oath. And then the humour of the situation struck him, and he laughed and looked lightly up to heaven, where the stars seemed to be winking over his discomfiture.

What was to be done? It looked very like a night in the frosty streets. The idea of the dead woman popped into his imagination, and gave him a hearty fright; what had happened to her in the early night might very well happen to him before morning. And he so young! and with such immense possibilities of disorderly amusement before him! He felt quite pathetic over the notion of his own fate, as if it had been some one else's, and made a little imaginative vignette of the scene in the morning when they should find his body.

He passed all his chances under review, turning the white between his thumb and forefinger. Unfortunately he was on bad terms with some old friends who would once have taken pity on him in such a plight. He had lampooned them in verses, he had beaten and cheated them; and yet now, when he was in so close a pinch, he thought there was at least one who might perhaps relent. It was a chance. It was worth trying at least, and he would go and see.

On the way, two little accidents happened to him which coloured his musings in a very different manner. For,

first, he fell in with the track of a patrol and walked in it for some hundred yards, although it lay out of his direction. And this spirited him up; at least he had confused his trail; for he was still possessed with the idea of people tracking him all about Paris over the snow, and collaring him next morning before he was awake. The other matter affected him very differently. He passed a street corner, where, not so long before, a woman and her child had been devoured by wolves. This was just the kind of weather, he reflected, when wolves might take it into their heads to enter Paris again; and a lone man in these deserted streets would run the chance of something worse than a mere scare. He stopped and looked upon the place with an unpleasant interest—it was a centre where several lanes intersected each other; and he looked down them all one after another, and held his breath to listen, lest he should detect some galloping black things on the snow or hear the sound of howling between him and the river. He remembered his mother telling him the story and pointing out the spot, while he was yet a child. His mother! If he only knew where she lived, he might make sure at least of shelter. He determined he would inquire upon the morrow; nay, he would go and see her too, poor old girl! So thinking, he arrived at his destination—his last hope for the night.

The house was quite dark, like its neighbours; and yet after a few taps, he heard a movement overhead, a door opening, and a cautious voice asking who was there. The poet named himself in a loud whisper, and waited, not without some trepidation, the result. Nor had he to wait long. A window was suddenly opened, and a pailful of slops splashed down upon the doorstep. Villon had not been unprepared for something of the sort, and had put himself as much in shelter as the nature of the porch admitted; but after all that, he was deplorably drenched below the waist. His hose began to freeze almost at once. Death from cold and exposure stared him in the face; he remembered he was of phthisical tendency, and began coughing tentatively. But the gravity of the danger steadied his nerves. He stopped a few hundred yards from the door where he had been so rudely used, and reflected with his finger to his nose. He could only see one way of getting lodging, and that was to take it. He had noticed a house not far away, which looked as if it might be easily broken into, and thither he betook himself promptly, entertaining himself on the way with the idea of a room still hot, with a table still loaded with the remains of supper, where he might pass the rest of the black hours, and whence he should issue, on the morrow, with an armful of valuable plate. He even considered on what viands and what wines he should prefer; and as he was calling the roll of his favourite dainties, roast fish presented itself to his mind with an odd mixture of amusement and horror.

"I shall never finish that ballade," he thought to himself; and then, with another shudder at the recollection, "Oh, damn his fat head!" he repeated fervently, and spat upon the snow.

The house in question looked dark at first sight; but as Villon made a preliminary inspection in search of the handiest point of attack, a little twinkle

of light caught his eye from behind a curtained window.

"The devil!" he thought. "People awake! Some student or some saint, confound the crew! Can't they get drunk and lie in bed snoring like their neighbours? What's the good of curfew, and poor devils of bell-ringers jumping at a rope's end in bell-towers? What's the use of day, if people sit up all night? The gripes to them!" He grinned as he saw where his logic was leading him. "Every man to his business, after all," added he, "and if they're awake, by the Lord, I may come by a supper honestly for this once, and cheat the devil."

He went boldly to the door and knocked with an assured hand. On both previous occasions, he had knocked timidly with some dread of attracting notice, but now when he had just discarded the thought of a burglarious entry, knocking at a door seemed a mighty simple and innocent proceeding. The sound of his blows echoed through the house with him, phantasmal reverberations, as though it were quite empty; but these had scarcely died away before a measured tread drew near, a couple of bolts were withdrawn, and one wing was opened broadly as though no guile or fear of guile were known to those within. A tall figure of a man, muscular and spare, but a little bent, confronted Villon. The head was massive in bulk, but finely sculptured; the nose blunt at the bottom, but refining upward to where it joined a pair of strong and honest eyebrows; the mouth and eyes surrounded with delicate markings, and the whole face based upon a thick white beard, boldly and squarely trimmed. Seen as it was by the light of a flickering hand-lamp, it looked perhaps nobler than it had a right to do; but it was a fine face, honourable rather than intelligent, strong, simple, and righteous.

"You knock late, sir," said the old man in resonant, courteous tones.

Villon cringed, and brought up many servile words of apology; at a crisis of this sort, the beggar was uppermost in him, and the man of genius hid his head with confusion.

"You are cold," repeated the old man, "and hungry? Well, step in." And he ordered him into the house with a noble enough gesture.

"Some great seigneur," thought Villon, as his host, setting down the lamp on the flagged pavement of the entry, shot the bolts once more into their places.

"You will pardon me if I go in front," he said, when this was done; and he preceded the poet upstairs into a large apartment, warmed with a pan of charcoal and lit by a great lamp hanging from the roof. It was very bare of furniture; only some old plate on a sideboard; some folios; and a stand of armour between the windows. Some smart tapestry hung upon the walls, representing the crucifixion of our Lord in one piece, and in another a scene of shepherds and shepherdesses by a running stream. Over the chimney was a shield of arms.

"Will you seat yourself," said the old man, "and forgive me if I leave you? I am alone in my house to-night, and if you are to eat I must forage for you myself."

No sooner was his host gone than Villon leaped from the chair on which he had just seated himself, and began examining the room, with the stealth

and passion of a cat. He weighed the gold flagons in his hand, opened all the folios, and investigated the arms upon the shield, and the stuff with which the seats were lined. He raised the window curtains, and saw that the windows were set with rich stained glass in figures, so far as he could see, of martial import. Then he stood in the middle of the room, drew a long breath, and retaining it with puffed cheeks, looked round and round him, turning on his heels, as if to impress every feature of the apartment on his memory.

"Seven pieces of plate," he said. "If there had been ten, I would have risked it. A fine house, and a fine old master, so help me all the saints!"

And just then, hearing the old man's tread returning along the corridor, he stole back to his chair, and began humbly toasting his wet legs before the charcoal pan.

His entertainer had a plate of meat in one hand and a jug of wine in the other. He set down the plate upon the table, motioning Villon to draw in his chair, and going to the sideboard, brought back two goblets, which he filled.

"I drink to your better fortune," he said, gravely touching Villon's cup with his own.

"To our better acquaintance," said the poet, growing bold. A mere man of the people would have been awed by the courtesy of the old seigneur, but Villon was hardened in that matter; he had made mirth for great lords before now, and found them as black rascals as himself. And so he devoted himself to the viands with a ravenous gusto, while the old man, leaning backwards, watched him with steady, curious eyes.

"You have blood on your shoulder, my man," he said.

Montigny must have laid his wet hand upon him as he left the house. He cursed Montigny in his heart.

"It was none of my shedding," he stammered.

"I had not supposed so," returned his host quietly. "A brawl?"

"Well, something of that sort," Villon admitted with a quaver.

"Perhaps a fellow murdered?"

"Oh, no, not murdered," said the poet, more and more confused. "It was all fair play—murdered by accident. I had no hand in it, God strike me dead!" he added fervently.

"One rogue the fewer, I dare say," observed the master of the house.

"You may dare to say that," agreed Villon, infinitely relieved. "As big a rogue as there is between here and Jerusalem. He turned up his toes like a lamb. But it was a nasty thing to look at. I dare say you've seen dead men in your time, my lord?" he added, glancing at the armour.

"Many," said the old man. "I have followed the wars, as you imagine."

Villon laid down his knife and fork, which he had just taken up again.

"Were any of them bald?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, and with hair as white as mine."

"I don't think I should mind the white so much," said Villon. "His was red." And he had a return of his shuddering and tendency to laughter, which he drowned with a great draught of wine. "I'm a little put out when I think of it," he went on. "I knew him—damn him! And then the cold gives a man fancies—or the fancies give a man cold, I don't know which."

"Have you any money?" asked the old man.

"I have one white," returned the poet, laughing. "I got it out of a dead jade's stocking in a porch. She was as dead as Caesar, poor wench, and as cold as a church, with bits of ribbon sticking in her hair. This is a hard world in winter for wolves and wenches and poor rogues like me."

"I," said the old man, "am Enguerrand de la Fecuillée, seigneur de Brisetout, bailly du Patatrac. Who and what may you be?"

Villon rose and made a suitable reverence. "I am called Francis Villon," he said, "a poor Master of Arts of this university. I know some Latin, and a great deal of vice. I can make chansons, ballades, lais, virelais, and roundels, and I am very fond of wine. I was born in a garret, and I shall not improbably die upon the gallows. I may add, my lord, that from this night forward I am your lordship's very obsequious servant to command."

"No servant of mine," said the knight; "my guest for this evening, and no more."

"A very grateful guest," said Villon politely; and he drank in dumb show to his entertainer.

"You are shrewd," began the old man, tapping his forehead, "very shrewd; you have learning; you are a clerk; and yet you take a small piece of money off a dead woman in the street. Is it not a kind of theft?"

"It is a kind of theft much practised in the wars, my lord."

"The wars are the field of honour," returned the old man proudly. "There a man plays his life upon the cast; he fights in the name of his lord the king, his Lord God, and all their lordships the holy saints and angels."

"Put it," said Villon, "that I were really a thief, should I not play my life also, and against heavier odds?"

"For gain, but not for honour."

"Gain?" repeated Villon with a shrug. "Gain! The poor fellow wants supper, and takes it. So does the soldier in a campaign. Why, what are all these requisitions we hear so much about? If they are not gain to those who take them, they are loss enough to the others. The men-at-arms drink by a good fire, while the burgher bites his nails to buy them wine and wood. I have seen a good many ploughmen swinging on trees about the country, ay, I have seen thirty on one elm, and a very poor figure they made; and when I asked some one how all these came to be hanged, I was told it was because they could not scrape together enough crowns to satisfy the men-at-arms."

"These things are a necessity of war, which the low-born must endure with constancy. It is true that some captains drive over hard; there are spirits in every rank not easily moved by pity; and indeed many follow arms who are no better than brigands."

"You see," said the poet, "you cannot separate the soldier from the brigand; and what is a thief but an isolated brigand with circumspect manners? I steal a couple of mutton chops, without so much as disturbing people's sleep; the farmer grumbles a bit, but sups none the less wholesomely on what remains. You come up blowing gloriously on a trumpet, take away the whole sheep, and beat the farmer pitifully into the bargain. I have no trumpet; I am only Tom, Dick, or Harry;

I am a rogue and a dog, and hanging's too good for me—with all my heart; but just you ask the farmer which of us he prefers, just find out which of us he lies awake to curse on cold nights."

"Look at us two," said his lordship. "I am old, strong, and honoured. If I were turned from my house to-morrow, hundreds would be proud to shelter me. Poor people would go out and pass the night in the streets with their children, if I merely hinted that I wished to be alone. And I find you up, wandering homeless, and picking farthings off dead women by the wayside! I fear no man and nothing; I have seen you tremble and lose countenance at a word. I wait God's summons contentedly in my own house, or, if it please the king to call me out again, upon the field of battle. You look for the gallows; a rough, swift death, without hope or honour. Is there no difference between these two?"

"As far as to the moon," Villon acquiesced. "But if I had been born lord of Brisetout, and you had been the poor scholar Francis, would the difference have been any the less? Should not I have been warming my knees at this charcoal pan, and would not you have been groping for farthings in the snow? Should not I have been the soldier, and you the thief?"

"A thief!" cried the old man. "I a thief! If you understood your words, you would repent them."

Villon turned out his hands with a gesture of inimitable impudence. "If your lordship had done me the honour to follow my argument!" he said.

"I do you too much honour in submitting to your presence," said the knight. "Learn to curb your tongue when you speak with old and honourable men, or some one hastier than I may reprove you in a sharper fashion." And he rose and paced the lower end of the apartment, struggling with anger and antipathy. Villon surreptitiously refilled his cup, and settled himself more comfortably in the chair, crossing his knees and leaning his head upon one hand and the elbow against the back of the chair. He was now replete and warm; and he was in nowise frightened for his host, having gauged him as justly as was possible between two such different characters. The night was far spent, and in a very comfortable fashion after all; and he felt morally certain of a safe departure on the morrow.

"Tell me one thing," said the old man, pausing in his walk. "Are you really a thief?"

"I claim the sacred rights of hospitality," returned the poet. "My lord, I am."

"You are very young," the knight continued.

"I should never have been so old," replied Villon, showing his fingers, "if I had not helped myself with these ten talents. They have been my nursing mothers and my nursing fathers."

"You may still repent and change."

"I repent daily," said the poet. "There are few people more given to repentance than poor Francis. As for change, let somebody change my circumstances. A man must continue to eat, if it were only that he may continue to repent."

"The change must begin in the heart," returned the old man solemnly.

"My dear lord," answered Villon, "do you really fancy that I steal for pleas-

ure? I hate stealing, like any other piece of work or of danger. My teeth chatter when I see a gallows. But I must eat, I must drink, I must mix in society of some sort. What the devil! Man is not a solitary animal—*Cui Deus fæminam tradit.* Make me king's pantler—make me abbot of St. Denis; make me bailly of the Patatrac; and then I shall be changed indeed. But as long as you leave me the poor scholar Francis Villon, without a farthing, why, of course, I remain the same."

"The grace of Gold is all-powerful."

"I should be a heretic to question it," said Francis. "It has made you lord of Brisetout and bailly of the Patatrac; it has given me nothing but the wits under my hat and these ten toes upon my hands. May I help myself to wine? I thank you respectfully. By God's grace, you have a very superior vintage."

The lord of Brisetout walked to and fro with his hands behind his back. Perhaps he was not yet quite settled in his mind about the parallel between thieves and soldiers; perhaps Villon had interested him by some cross-thread of sympathy; perhaps his wits were simply muddled by so much unfamiliar reasoning; but whatever the cause, he somehow yearned to convert the young man to a better way of thinking, and could not make up his mind to drive him forth again into the street.

"There is something more than I can understand in this," he said at length. "Your mouth is full of subtleties, and the devil has led you very far astray; but the devil is only a very weak spirit before God's truth, and all his subtleties vanish at a word of true honour, like darkness at morning. Listen to me once more. I learned long ago that a gentleman should live chivalrously and lovingly to God, and the king, and his lady; and though I have seen many strange things done, I have still striven to command my ways upon that rule. It is not only written in all noble histories, but in every man's heart, if he will take care to read. You speak of food and wine, and I know very well that hunger is a difficult trial to endure; but you do not speak of other wants; you say nothing of honour, of faith to God and other men, of courtesy, of love without reproach. It may be that I am not very wise—and yet I think I am —but you seem to me like one who has lost his way and made a great error in life. You are attending to the little wants, and you have totally forgotten the great and only real ones, like a man who should be doctoring a toothache on the Judgment Day. For such things as honour and love and faith are not only nobler than food and drink, but indeed I think that we desire them more, and suffer more sharply for their absence. I speak to you as I think you will most easily understand me. Are you not, while careful to fill your belly, disregarding another appetite in your heart, which spoils the pleasure of your life and keeps you continually wretched?"

Villon was sensibly nettled under all this sermonising. "You think I have no sense of honour!" he cried. "I'm poor enough, God knows! It's hard to see rich people with their gloves, and you blowing in your hands. An empty belly is a bitter thing, although you speak so lightly of it. If you had had as many as I, perhaps you would change your tune. Any way I'm a thief—make the

most of that—but I'm not a devil from hell, God strike me dead. I would have you to know I've an honour of my own, as good as yours, though I don't prate about it all day long, as if it was a God's miracle to have any. It seems quite natural to me; I keep it in its box till it's wanted. Why now, look you here, how long have I been in this room with you? Did you not tell me you were alone in the house? Look at your gold plate? You're strong, if you like, but you're old and unarmed, and I have my knife. What did I want but a jerk of the elbow and here would have been you with the cold steel in your bowels, and there would have been me, linking in the streets, with an armful of gold cups! Did you suppose I hadn't wit enough to see that? And I scorned the action. There are your damned goblets, as safe as in a church; there are you, with your heart ticking as good as new; and here am I, ready to go out again as poor as I came in, with my one white that you threw in my teeth! And you think I have no sense of honour—God strike me dead!"

The old man stretched out his right arm. "I will tell you what you are," he said. "You are a rogue, my man, an impudent and a black-hearted rogue and vagabond. I have passed an hour with you. Oh! believe me, I feel myself disgraced! And you have eaten and drunk at my table. But now I am sick at your presence; the day has come, and the night-bird should be off to his roost. Will you go before, or after?"

"Which you please," returned the poet, rising. "I believe you to be strictly honourable." He thoughtfully emptied his cup. "I wish I could add you were intelligent," he went on, knocking on his head with his knuckles. "Age, age! the brains stiff and rheumatic."

The old man preceded him from a point of self-respect; Villon followed, whistling, with his thumbs in his girdle.

"God pity you," said the lord of Brisetout at the door.

"Good-bye, papa," returned Villon with a yawn. "Many thanks for the cold mutton."

The door closed behind him. The dawn was breaking over the white roofs. A chill, uncomfortable morning ushered in the day. Villon stood and heartily stretched himself in the middle of the road.

"A very dull old gentleman," he thought. "I wonder what his goblets may be worth."

Rinconete and Cortadillo

On the confines of Alcudia, between the provinces of Castille and Andalusia, might be seen a notable house of entertainment for travellers, called the *Little Windmill*. On one of the hottest days of summer, two boys were seen loitering about this place; one was about fourteen years of age, and the other might perhaps have attained his seventeenth year. They were both good looking, though in a sadly destitute condition; coats they had none; their trowsers were of coarse linen, and, for want of better stockings, they were obliged to be contented with their bare skin.

It is true that their feet were covered, those of one being carefully bound in straw or rushes, while the shoes of the other were of so peculiar a formation, that it would seem the utmost ingenuity of the wearer had been displayed, in rendering them more than usually accessible to the elements of air and water. The head of one was partly covered by a scanty cap; the other wore a hat, though without seeming to trouble himself about its deficiency of a crown and brim. The scanty remains of a shirt of the colour of chamois leather partly adorned the neck and shoulders of the younger; while his companion had remedied the inconvenience of such a deficiency by the waistband of an old pair of trowsers, covered with grease and completely in tatters, which hung suspended from his neck on his breast, and appeared to conceal a small bundle. In this repository of valuables was concealed a pack of cards of a different shape to those generally used; for by reason of their long service, the corners were so much worn, that they began to assume a circular shape, which had been rendered still more distinct by the application of the scissors, it being found that the circular form was the most durable. Both the youths were much sun-burnt; their nails were begrimed with dirt, and their skin could hardly be called clean. One was armed with a broken sword, and the other with a yellow-handled knife, which completed their costume.

They sallied forth from the inn and seated themselves opposite each other, under a sort of covering which serves for a viranda in houses of that description; and the elder, bowing very politely to the other, addressed him with all the air of a man of *ton*. "If I might take the liberty of addressing a gentleman of your distinguished appearance without the ceremony of introduction, I should enquire what part of the country has the honour of claiming you as a resident, and whither you intend to travel?"

"Señor Caballero," returned the other, with equal ceremony and politeness, "with respect to your first question, I am sorry that I am unable to satisfy your curiosity, being utterly ignorant of it myself; and, as to the

second, I lament that I can afford you as little information, for I really don't know."

"Why, truly, Sir," said he without the shirt, "if I might give an opinion, you certainly don't look as though you had dropped from heaven; and if you had, I should not think you would choose this place for your descent,—consequently you must be going somewhere."

"That is very just," replied the one with the hat; "and yet I have told you the truth, for my country is no longer mine, my father having turned me out; and as to the future, I must trust to chance, which I dare say will put something in my way by which I may get an honest livelihood."

"And pray, may I ask whether you belong to any profession?" said the original queriest.

"No other," replied the other, or younger, "than running like a hare, leaping like a deer, or using a pair of scissors very delicately, will fit me for."

"That is all very good and useful," said his companion, "for on next Holy Thursday you will find good employment in cutting paper ornaments for the church." "Ah, but my abilities in cutting do not lie that way," said the younger gentleman. "My father, by the blessing of Providence, is a tailor and shoemaker, and he taught me to cut out *antiparas*, which, as I dare say you know, are buskins, used by men in harvest,—I obtained such a proficiency in the art, that I might have passed examination as a master, had not my bad fortune deprived me of my employment."

"That will happen to the best of us," remarked the elder cavalier, "and I have always heard that the best abilities have always the worst fortune. But I don't doubt a gentleman of your acquirements has some way of bettering his fortune; and, if my judgment don't deceive me, you possess some other accomplishments, which perhaps your modesty will not allow you to make public." "Why, that is very true," said he, of the shirt laughing, "but, as you say, Sir, they are not exactly for the public."

"Well, then," said the other, at the instant, "although I consider myself as discreet as most youth, yet, to give you some confidence in me, I will be open with you, and shall expect the same in return, for it is not without reason that fortune has thrown us together, and I am sure it will be to our loss if we do not become friends. You must know that my name is Pedro de Rincon, and I am a native of Fuenfrida, a place of some note, where my father is a minister of the church, that is to say, he sells the pope's indulgences, being, as the vulgar call him, the Bulero. As I assisted him in his traffic, I acquired such dexterity in making bargains, that few could obtain any advantage over me; but observing one day that I was fonder of the money I received, than of my business, he put a purse of dollars into my hand, and packed me off to Madrid to seek my fortune.

"Amongst the temptations of the city, the contents of my purse soon vanished, and I found myself at last possessed of more wit than fortune. I applied for assistance to those who had assisted *me* to spend my money, but it was perfectly astounding to see the want of recollection evinced by these

wretches directly I made known my distress; some positively denied my acquaintance, while others dismissed me with their advice to be more cautious in future. I shrugged my shoulders, but suffered my lot patiently; and turned out to seek my fortune with such readiness, that I did not think of providing myself with any luxuries. I took what I thought most necessary, from the things which remained to me, and amongst other, these cards—at the same time drawing them from their concealment—from which I have managed to derive an honourable subsistence amongst the inns frequented by travellers. I always play at *Vingt-un*, which is a very excellent game for my purpose; and although you see the cards are somewhat the worse for wear, yet, I can assure you, they possess a marvellous virtue for those who understand them; indeed, they are become so familiar to me from long acquaintance, that I know them as well by the back as the front.

"Independently of these advantages, I learned of a certain ambassador a method of handling the cards, by which I am as much at home with their capabilities, as you are in the cutting of *antiparas*. So you see, my honourable Sir, that I am in no danger of starving, for let me be in what place I may, there are always persons to be found who are willing to divert themselves with an innocent game; and he who has the least experience, is generally the loser. Now, for example, let us look out for a pigeon amongst these carriers within; we will sit down and play as though in earnest, and if any one wishes to make a third, you will see that he will be the first to lay down his cash."

"With all my heart," returned the younger adventurer, "and I feel much indebted for your frankness, in return for which I can do no otherwise than relate, in a few words, what concerns myself. I am a native of that goodly country situated between Salamanca and Medina del Campo. My father is a tailor, and taught me such a good use of the scissors, that, instead of cutting clothes, I learned to cut purses. My ambition, however, was not to be limited to the narrow precincts of a country village; and I was already disgusted with the treatment of a mother-in-law; leaving my home, therefore, I repaired to Toledo, where, giving a free scope to my abilities, I did wonders. There was no rosary, let it be hung ever so carefully, and no pocket however ingeniously contrived, that my fingers did not visit, or my scissors divide—even though they were guarded by the eyes of Argus. I can assure you, that, during the four months I resided in that city, I managed to escape all inconveniences. I was never caught between double doors; never taken off my guard; fell not into the hands of the constables, nor became the dupe of an informer.

"It is now, however, about eight days since, that a spy of the police gave notice of me to the corregidor, who, being a great admirer of people of talent, expressed an anxious desire to be acquainted with me; my extreme modesty, for which I am remarkable, prevented me that honour; for thinking myself neither by birth nor education qualified to move in such distinguished

society, I was obliged to disappoint his worship, by withdrawing myself from Toledo. I effected my removal with such haste, that I actually did not allow myself time to procure a coach, to provide myself with linen, or indeed any of those conveniences with which gentlemen usually travel; and here I am as you see me."

"Really that was very amusing," said Rincon, grinning; "but now as we know each other, I think it is time to drop our gentility, and confess that we have not any thing in the world but what we stand in."

"There is no use in mincing the matter," quoth Diego Cortado, for by such name he called himself, "it is even as you say; and since our friendship ought to be lasting, Señor Rincon, I think we should commence it by a proper manifestation of our feelings:" and then rising, both the gentlemen embraced each other with great apparent cordiality and good will. This little ceremony completing their good understanding, they sat down to play with the abovementioned cards, having cleaned them from dust and straw, though not from grease, and certain deceitful signs; and in a few hands Cortado became as clever at the game as his master Rincon.

At this time one of the carriers came out, when seeing the two boys at play, he asked them whether they had any objection to a third, to which they goodnaturedly consented. Fortune favoured the boys so well, that in less than half an hour the carrier lost twelve reals, and twenty-two maravedis, which in paying cost him just as many twinges of regret. The loser, however, seeing his adversaries were only boys, thought he could take his money from them again with impunity; but the one drew his piece of a sword, and the other handled his knife so formidably, that had not the carrier's companions come to his succour, it was likely to have gone ill with him.

At this time a troop of people passed on horseback, who, seeing the disturbance between the boys and the carrier, parted them, and told the former they were going to pass the night about a league further, whither, if they pleased, they might accompany them. "We will go with pleasure," said Rincon, "and any thing we can do in return, we shall be most happy;" and, without further invitation, they jumped up on two of the mules and set forward with the party, leaving the carriers in no very enviable state of temper. The landlord could not help laughing at the dexterity of the young rogues; for he confessed he had overheard their conversation, and thus learnt that the cards were false. At this discovery, the carrier could hardly contain himself for rage. He swore the most formidable oaths, and declared his intention of following the young sharpers and reclaiming his lost pieces—not that he valued the money, as he said; but from pure shame to think that so great a man as he should be cheated by two such very little rogues. His companion, however, endeavoured to pacify him, saying, "It was much better to abide by the loss, than to get laughed at for his simplicity."

The two companions now congratulated themselves on their good fortune, and made themselves so useful to their

fellow-travellers, that they were allowed to mount behind them the best part of the way; and although many opportunities occurred of exercising their professional abilities with advantage, yet they desisted from the consideration that they might endanger their journey to Seville, whither they were going. However, on entering the city by the Aduana gate, Cortado was not able to resist the temptation of cutting open the portmanteau of a Frenchman, behind whom he was mounted. His knife was handy on all occasions, and he inflicted so grievous a wound on the valise, that he presently discovered its contents, and selected from them two shirts, a small sun-dial, and a memorandum book. These things, it is true, were of little value; but they served to replenish their purse, which was now exhausted, with twenty reals.

Having secured this, they went to view the city, of which they had heard so much; the cathedral excited their admiration, and they were astonished at the great concourse of people on the river. The galleys, likewise, did not escape their observation, and an involuntary sigh escaped from each, as his thoughts naturally anticipated the time when he might have a closer view of them.

They were surprised to see such a number of boys with baskets, plying for hire; and they took the opportunity of asking one the nature of his office —whether it was laborious—and what was the gain? It was an Austrian boy of whom he made the inquiry, and he replied, "That the business was easy enough—that they paid no duty—and that on some days they gained five reals, and on others six, as it might happen—with which they lived the life of a king—free to seek any master that payed them well—and then they enjoyed themselves after their own fashion."

This account of the Austrian pleased the two friends mightily; for the anticipation of carrying the goods of others seemed highly favourable to their peculiar abilities, and they forthwith determined to purchase the necessary equipment for their new profession. The Austrian told them it would be necessary to buy some small bags, and three baskets, for fish, flesh, and fruit—the bags to be used solely for bread; and that when provided with these necessaries, they were to attend in the mornings at the flesh-market, in the square of San Salvador—on fastdays at the fish-market—and in the evening they were to look for employment at the river side. This instruction the two friends committed to memory; and having purchased what was necessary with the spoils of the Frenchman, they planted themselves the next morning in the square of San Salvador. They had not been there long, before their new baskets attracted the attention of other boys, who soon flocked round them, anxious to know whence they came, and everything concerning them; to all which the friends gave those answers which might have been expected from young persons of their talent and discretion.

At this time a soldier and a student came up; who liking the cleanliness of the baskets, the former called Rincon, and the student beckoned Cortado. Rincon, by way of commencing his of-

fice, bowed very humbly to his employer, and said, "I hope your honour will not forget that I am a beginner."

"Never fear," said the soldier, "your reward shall not be amiss, for I can afford to be liberal,—I am going to give a feast to-day to some friends of my mistress."

"Then pray load me as much as you please," returned the youth, "for I have both the will and the strength to carry the whole market; aye, and sugar to season it withal, if such be your honour's pleasure."

The soldier was so well pleased with the quickness of the youth, that he told him, if he desired to quit his present employment, he would take him into his service. Rincon replied with many thanks, saying,—"That as he was so newly entered on the office, he wished to see whether it would turn out well or ill; but, in case of failure, he should not have the honour of serving so respectable a gentleman, because he had given his word to a priest." The soldier laughed, and gave him a good load, directing him to the house of his mistress, and desiring him to remember it well, as he would have occasion to go there often; he then gave him three quartos, and dismissed him. Rincon returned with the utmost speed to the square, lest he should lose an opportunity; for the Asturian had cautioned him to be diligent and trustworthy; although in carrying small fish, or such like commodity, there was no harm, he said, in taking a little from a quantity which could not be missed; but on no account to take it if there should be the least chance of detection, as credit was the soul of their trade.

Cortado returned just about the same time as Rincon, who, showing his companion the three quartos, asked him what luck he had met with? Cortado, putting his hand into his breast, drew out a purse which seemed to have been made in times past, but was nevertheless well stocked with money, and said, —"His reverence has done me the favour to pay me with this purse, and with these two quartos; but take the purse, Rincon, lest his worship may change his mind." Rincon had hardly secreted the purse, when back came the student, perspiring at every pore, and in the utmost agitation and perplexity; coming to Cortado, "My good boy," said he, "have you seen a purse of such and such marks, containing fifteen crowns of gold, three reals, and so many maravedis in quartos, only wanting the few pieces with which I paid for the meat which you carried?"

Cortado replied, without moving a muscle of his countenance, "All I can say to your reverence is, that your purse would not have been lost had you taken better care of it."

"That is but too true, sinner that I am," returned the student, "for had I taken better care of it, some rascal could never have robbed me."

"That is exactly what I think," said Cortado; "but as your reverence knows there is a remedy for all things but death, now I should advise your reverence to avail yourself of the first and principal, which is patience, for it is recommended by God. One day follows another; and he that gives takes away; so in like manner the time may

arrive, that he who has stolen your purse may repent and restore it, even in better condition than he found it."

"That I will excuse," interrupted the student.

"For my part," continued Cortado, "I would not be the stealer of the purse for a trifle, for as your reverence is in sacred orders, it is neither more nor less than sacrilige."

"You say right," said the afflicted student, "for though I am no priest, but only the sacristan of a convent, the money I have lost is the third of a chaplain's salary, which is left in my charge, and therefore it is blessed and holy coin."

"As you have made your bread so must you eat it," said Cortado, in a condoling manner; "but the day of judgment will arrive, and then we shall see the rogue who was hardened enough to steal the chaplain's salary. And pray what might the situation of your friend be worth per annum, with regard to salary, Señor Sacristan?" asked Cortado, innocently.

"Salary of the devil," returned the sacristan, incensed beyond measure at what appeared to be trifling with him. "Is this a time to talk about salary? Tell me, my friend, do you know any thing of the purse? if so, say; if not, God be with you; for I must go and have it cried."

"That is the best thing you can do," said Cortado, "and remember," he added, calling after him, "that you are very particular about the description of the purse, and the exact sum contained therein, for if you make the mistake of a single farthing, you will never see your purse again in this world; I only say this, Sir, by way of advice."

"There is no fear of that, my friend," returned the sacristan, "I have it so truly in my memory that I shall not mistake a single thread." Saying this, he drew from his pocket a handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his countenance; a moment not lost on Cortado, who immediately seemed to take a more vivid interest in the poor man's loss, and suggested several expedients for its recovery. The advice of Cortado was given in so vague a manner, that the sacristan was tempted to ask a repetition; during which, Cortado, taking advantage of the sacristan's anxiety, contrived to beguile him of his handkerchief, when, with many expressions of condolence, he took his leave, recommending him to use all diligence in the recovery of his property; and then returned to Rincon.

"What have you been so busy about with the student?" enquired his companion.

"Why I have been listening to the poor gentleman's distress, which I protest has so affected me, that I was under the necessity of borrowing his handkerchief," replied the young wag, at the same time producing it, and applying it to his eyes.

The two young rogues then indulged in some merriment at the expense of the poor sacristan; but Cortado had not effected the latter transfer so secretly as to escape the observation of a lad who had been watching him. "Pray gentlemen," said he, advancing towards them, "may I ask of what profession you call yourselves?" "We don't understand you, Sir," replied

Rincon. "I ask you, gentlemen, whether you are from Murcia," repeated the youth. "Neither from Murcia nor from Thebes," responded Cortado, "and if you have nothing further to say, I wish you a good morning."

"You don't choose to understand me, eh! my masters?" said the querist, "but I think I could soon make you understand,—aye, and teach you to eat pap out of a spoon. What I wish to ask of you, gentlemen, is merely whether your honours are thieves, or no? although it is a useless question, because I already see that you are; but I must inquire with more reason, whether you have paid your footing to the Señor Monipodio?"

"Do thieves pay taxes in this country, my fair Sir?" asked Rincon. "If they do not actually pay, at least they are registered by the Señor Monipodio, who is their father and their master; therefore I should counsel you to come with me for that purpose, or perhaps you will have cause to repent it."

"I always thought," said Cortado, "that thieving was a free trade, without any duty or impost; and if the professors paid at all, it was only at the stocks, or over the back and shoulders. But as every country has its own peculiar regulations, so we shall be happy to conform to yours, if we might make bold to ask a gentleman of your respectable appearance, to guide us to the abode of the worthy cavalier of whom you speak, where we will prove our proficiency in the science."

"That is well," said the other, "and you will see how well qualified our master is for his situation. Why! during the four years he has had charge of us, not more than four have suffered the capital punishment. But come along, and on the road I will explain to you a little of our vocabulary, which it will be necessary for you to know." During this walk, which was not very short, their new acquaintance instructed them in the language of the craft, very much to the edification of the novice. "And pray, Sir," asked Rincon, "may I venture to inquire whether you are a thief yourself?" "Yes, Sir; that is to say, by the blessing of God and the prayers of good people, I hope I shall be, although I am not yet out of my noviciate."

"Well," said Cortado, "you will excuse me for the remark; but although I have seen and heard a good deal, I never yet heard of thieving by the grace of God and the prayers of good people."

"Sir," replied the guide, "I am no theologian, and therefore cannot argue on the subject; but this I know, that every body ought to praise God in the vocation to which Providence has been pleased to call him; and the more so as our master Monipodio has expressly ordered it."

"Doubtless that gentleman must be of a very religious turn," said Rincon, "since he makes his thieves praise God."

"He is the most exemplary man of our profession," returned the youth; "he orders that a part of every thing which is stolen, shall be set apart to buy oil for the lamp of an image in the city, which is possessed of marvellous virtue. Indeed we have all seen the good effects of it; for it was but the other day, when a friend of ours was condemned to punishment for stealing two asses, and he bore it without a single cry, as though it was noth-

ing, which can only be attributed to our regular devotion. And you must know, that some of our club are so particular that they will not steal on Friday, nor hold conversation with any woman on a Sabbath whose name is Mary."

"Indeed! this is most exemplary conduct," said Cortado; "but pray do not the priests sometimes order these religious persons to make restitution or penance?"

"No," returned the other, "because they never go to confession; and if letters of excommunication are taken out against them, they are not likely to know it, because they never go to church during the time they are read; excepting, indeed, at the great holiday, when the crowd of people gathered there makes it a matter of business."

"Pious rogues!" ejaculated Rincon. "And what is the harm of it?" cried the other. "Is it not much worse to be a heretic? or to murder your father and mother?" "Why, that certainly is very bad," said Rincon; "but as fortune is so kind as to allow us to be of this respectable fraternity, I must beg you, Sir, to quicken your pace, for I am dying to see our respectable friend Monipodio, of whose virtues you have said so much." "Your praiseworthy impatience shall soon be gratified, for we are already arrived; but you must wait awhile at the portal, while I go within to see whether he is at leisure; for this is the hour he usually gives audience." The companions had just time to survey the house, which was not of the most promising appearance, when their guide reappeared, and called them in. They entered a small court yard, paved with fanciful brickwork, of a bright red colour: on one side was a bench, with three legs; and on the other a broken jar, placed on a stand not in a much better condition. In another place was a rush mat, and in the middle was a space for flowers.

The boys observed every thing attentively; and as the Señor Monipodio did not make his appearance, they took the liberty of entering the lower room, which adjoined the court-yard. There they beheld two fencing swords, with two shields of cork, suspended on pegs; a large bow without any case, and three more rush mats on the floor. On the front wall was placed an image of the Virgin, of no great merit in its workmanship; under which was seen a small basket, and a white basin; serving, as Rincon shrewdly conjectured, the former to receive alms, and the latter for holy water.

While they were waiting, there arrived two young men about twenty years of age, dressed as students; shortly afterwards came two of their brothers of the basket, and a blind man; who all walked about the open space without speaking a word to each other. Shortly after them came two elderly persons in spectacles; they looked grave and respectable; and carried in their hands good-sized rosaries. An old woman next arrived, who immediately on her entrance went to the image of the Virgin, and having taken the holy water with great devotion, prostrated herself before the image. Having indulged in this pious occupation some time, she arose, put a small offering into the basket, kissed the floor three times, lifted her hands and eyes to heaven, and

then rejoined the others in the court-yard. Lastly appeared, to give additional grace to the company, two bravos, of most sinister aspect; with large whiskers, slouched hats, and ruffled collars. They were armed with enormous swords, several pistols, and targets hanging from their belts. The moment these worthies cast their eyes on the two friends, they came to them, and inquired whether they belonged to the fraternity? Rincon answered in the affirmative, making great demonstration of respect, which the formidable appearance of the querists seemed to demand. At this moment arrived the long-expected Señor Monipodio, to the great joy of the respectable company assembled.

He seemed about forty-five years of age, tall of stature, his countenance of a sullen hue, with sunken eyes, eyebrows joined in the centre, and a black bushy beard. He was dressed in a shirt, and covered with a huge cloak reaching to his feet, on which were a pair of old shoes down at the heels. He wore loose trowsers of linen; and a hat used by the lowest vagabonds, bell shaped at the crown, and large in the brim. Across his shoulders was a belt, to which was suspended a short and stout sword. His hands were short, with fat fingers and long nails; and his feet were a pair, but not matched.

In short, the appearance of this gentleman, whose reputation had been so strenuously supported, was anything but favourable, he being, unfortunately, one of the most ill-looking, misshapen barbarians in the world. The youth who had acted as guide to Rincon and his friend, now led them forward, and presented them to the dignitary, saying, "These are the two gentlemen of whom I spoke to your worship. If you please, you can examine them, and see whether they are worthy to enter our brotherhood."

"That I will do with much pleasure," replied Monipodio, to whom, be it observed, the whole company bowed respectfully on his entrance, except the two bravos, who, considering themselves artists of a higher order, merely saluted him by touching their hats.

Monipodio, having made the tour of the court-yard to see his visitors, then asked the new comers their profession, name, and country. Rincon answered, that their profession did not need much explanation; and as to the rest, it was but of little importance, as such information was never expected from those who were to receive orders of distinction. "You are right, young man," returned the worthy, "it is always proper to conceal such truths;—for example, if business did not go well, it would not be very agreeable for your parents to see in the public book, that *so and so,* son of *so and so,* of such a place, stood in the pillory, or was flogged on such a day, for such a theft; no, no, you are right; and to prevent such inconveniences, every body ought to have a designation of his own choosing, therefore we only require your names." This was complied with by the two candidates, when Monipodio said,—"It is my pleasure, gentlemen, that henceforward you adopt the names of Rinconete and Cortadillo, for those which you at present bear, and which, I think, will be quite adapted to your pursuits. It is likewise necessary to make a private com-

munication of the names of your parents, as it is a custom with us once a year to say masses for the souls of those that are no more, which expense is defrayed from a common fund, appropriated for the benefit of the community, such as paying the lawyer who defends us, the priest who advises us, and to reward those our worthy friends who, when a hue and cry is raised after any of our members, appease the losers, by telling them that God will punish the wicked." "These are excellent regulations," said Rinconete, who had already accommodated himself to his new appellation; "I cannot sufficiently admire the sagacity of their compiler: but Señor, our parents have no need of the pious assistance of the brotherhood, being still in the land of the living. If a change should happily occur, we will not fail to inform you."

"That is well," said Monipodio; who then beckoned the boy who had introduced them. "Ganchoso," said the great man, "are the centinels placed?" "Yes, Sir, there are three placed to prevent any surprise." "Very good," returned the professor, "and now let us proceed to business! Rinconete, let me hear what are your attainments."

"Sir," replied he, "I possess a little spice of art; I can handle cards well, know how to turn an ace to a king, and little manœuvres of that sort; I know the table of chances better than the ten commandments, and have learnt that a stolen guinea is better than a borrowed crown." "That is very good as a beginning," said Monipodio, "but, as you must be aware, these are merely the groundwork of the art. However, with the assistance of a dozen lessons, by the blessing of God, I hope to make you a respectable artist." Rinconete bowed, and returned thanks to the master, who called on Cortadillo to state his qualifications.

"Sir," said Cortadillo, "I have learnt the rule of arithmetic, which says, 'put in two and take out five;' and I know how to dive into a pocket with ease and safety."

"Is that all?" said Monipodio. "That is all, to my misfortune," said Cortadillo.

"Never mind," said the professor, "you are in a good school, where, doubtless, you will soon improve, if you will follow my instructions."

"We have all the desire to improve in every thing that touches our art and occupation," replied Rinconete.

"Very good," said Monipodio, "but I should like to know how you could endure, upon occasion, a dozen lashes without opening your lips, even as much as to say, 'this mouth is mine.'"

"We are not so misinstructed," said Cortadillo, "as not to know, that what the tongue borrows sometimes the throat pays; and heaven have mercy on the poor devil who does not know it is as easy to say *no*, as *yes*."

"That is enough," said Monipodio, "I see you are a youth of talent; I am quite satisfied with you, and shall enter you forthwith on our company as a full member, without serving any noviciate, or paying any duty." The company declared their full approbation of the award of their superior, and complimented the newly-elected brother; when one of the centinels came running in, saying, that the alguazil of vagabonds

was coming towards the house at full speed.

"You need not disturb yourselves," said Monipodio to his friends, some of whom began to evidence signs of embarrassment, "this alguazil is a particular friend of mine, and never comes with any hostile intention; I will presently see what he wants." Every one was quieted with this intimation, and Monipodio went to the door to speak to his friend, with whom he was some little time in conversation. On his return, he asked who had occupied the square of San Salvador that morning.

"I was there," replied the guide. "Then how is it that you have not given notice of a purse, which you took there, containing fifteen gold crowns, two reals, and some quartos," asked Monipodio. "Why, Sir," replied the boy, "the fact is, that I have never seen the purse; I have not taken it—worse luck for me—and I cannot imagine who has."

"No nonsense with me, Sir," said Monipodio; "the purse must and shall be forthcoming; the alguazil is an intimate friend, and has done us great service." The boy protested, in the strongest terms, that he had no knowledge of it; when Monipodio began to show symptoms of ire. "No one shall dare to play tricks with me," said he, his eyes sparkling with anger: "produce the purse, or take the consequences." The boy again asserted his innocence, which only increased the master's rage, and excited the feelings of the whole community against the delinquent who had offended against the laws; when Rinconete, finding it would be a serious disturbance, consulted a moment with Cortadillo, who thought with him it would be better to appease the anger of Monipodio: therefore, drawing forth the sacristan's purse, he said, "Calm yourselves, my worthy masters, for here is the purse which the alguazil requires, and likewise a handkerchief which my companion borrowed from the same worthy gentleman this morning." The countenance of the professor immediately brightened at this confession, and he exclaimed! "Cortadillo the Good, for by such distinction shall you henceforward be known—keep the handkerchief, and content yourself this time with having rendered us a signal service; for the sacristan, whose acquaintance you made this morning, is a relative of the alguazil, who is one of our best friends; therefore, we must comply with the proverb, which says, 'To him who gives you a fowl it is not much to send a leg;' and the alguazil winks at more in a single day, than we could compass in a hundred." Much approbation was manifested by the company at this generous act; and they fully agreed in the justice of the encomium bestowed on Cortadillo, who remained as proud of his title as other worthy and distinguished men, who have acquired the like honour from their virtues or other qualities.

Before the return of Monipodio, two girls entered the apartment, who, from their address and manner, Rinconete easily guessed to belong to the community. They were welcomed very warmly by the two bravos, Chiquiznaque and Maniferro, the latter so called from having lost a hand by the course of law, and its place being supplied by one of iron. "Well, what news, my charmer?" said one, "what do you bring for

the good of the club?" "You will see directly," replied one of the girls, called Gananciosa; Silvatillo is coming."

She had hardly spoken these words, when a boy entered, bearing a large basket covered with a sheet. The good people seemed all very much delighted with the appearance of Silvatillo; and Monipodio, taking one of the rush mats, placed it in the middle, and invited his friends to place themselves round it; then uncovering the basket, which contained abundance of eatables, he desired every one to carve for himself. There was no want of good-will in obeying this injunction, and the knives of the guests were put in requisition; Cortadillo making use of his scanty sword in lieu of a better and more appropriate weapon. The contents of the basket were soon dispatched; and some elderly gentlemen who were of the party, obtained permission to leave, having, as they said, some important business to attend. These reverend members of the community, it appeared, were of the utmost utility; obtaining access by the respectability of their age to houses of consideration, and then ascertaining their value, and facilities for plunder, with which they did not fail to acquaint their worthy employer.

The meal was scarcely finished before a disturbance was heard within, and one of the scouts came running in to inform them that the justice, followed by a whole *posse comitatus*, was advancing to the house. In an instant all was confusion; the remains of the feast were scattered on all sides. Bravos and priests, old and young, lame and blind, instantly betook themselves to their different hiding-places for refuge; and in an instant, the scene of hilarity became as tranquil as though there had been no revellers there. Cortadillo and his friend remained, because they knew not whither to fly; and Monipodio, secure in conscious innocence, as master of the house awaited the coming storm.

It proved after all a groundless alarm. The justice passed on his way to some other quarter, and the runaways were about to be recalled, when a cavalier was introduced, who seemed to be known to Monipodio, who ordered the bravos to be called down, but no others. "How is it," said the cavalier, "that you have not executed my commands?"

"I do not know what has been done in the business," replied Monipodio, "but hear the artist who had the affair in hand, and I will answer for it he can give you good reason." He then called Chiquiznaque to give an account of his commission.

"Is it of the merchant in the crossway?" asked the man of office.

"The same," said the cavalier.

"Ah! I watched for him last night at the very door of his house," rejoined the bravo, "and when he came I looked him full in the face, which I found to be so very small, that there was positively not space enough for the fourteen slashes that you ordered me to give him; therefore I could not complete your destruction."

"My destruction!" echoed the cavalier, crossing himself, "God forbid! My instructions, I suppose the gentleman means to say."

"Yes," said the imperturbed Chiquiznaque, "that is what I mean. But lest you should say I am not a man of honour, and have neglected my duty, I

gave the required number of slashes on the face of his lacquey, who, I warrant, can show the marks."

"What use is that to me," said the cavalier; "I had rather that the master had seven than the lacquey fourteen; however, you will have no more than the money I left, and I will bid you a good morning." Saying this, he took off his hat, and, bowing to the gentlemen, was about to leave, when Señor Monipodio caught him by the skirt. "Stay, Sir, if you please," said he, "and as we have acted honourably in this affair, we shall expect you will do so likewise; there are twenty ducats wanting, which we must have before you leave."

"What do you call acting honourably?" said the cavalier. "Is it giving the punishment to the man that was intended for the master?"

"His honour forgets the proverb that says, 'love me, love my dog,'" said Chiquiznaque. "And what the devil has that to do with the case?" asked the cavalier. "A great deal," replied the other, "for the same rule reversed must be equally true; therefore, 'hate me, hate my dog,' is applicable here, and our conditions are thus honourably fulfilled."

"Come, your honour must not split straws with your servants," observed the professor, "but take my advice, and pay what has been honestly earned; and if you are contented to give an order that can be executed on the master, it shall be punctually performed."

"If you will do that," said the Cavalier, "I'll pay it willingly." "It shall be done as I am a christian," said the master, "I'll engage that Chiquiznaque shall make both master and man so like each other, that they shall not be known apart."

"Well, with this promise," said the cavalier, "take this chain for the twenty ducats owing, and forty on account of the business you have in hand. It is worth a thousand reals; but I shall require no change, as I think I shall have occasion shortly to send you another friend of mine on the same errand." He then took a handsome gold chain from his neck, which was received with the utmost politeness by Monipodio, and Chiquiznaque promised on that very night to wait on the merchant. The cavalier went away very well contented; and the professor then called the members who were absent, and placing himself in the centre, drew out his book of memorandums, and gave it to Rinconete to read aloud. The first part of the book was an account of the heavy business which had been paid for by their different employers, such as assassinations, slashing in the face with a poignard, maiming, &c. It began thus:—

"Memorandum of the serious business for the week.

"First, The merchant of the crossway to receive fourteen cuts across the face —value fifty crowns—thirty received on account; to be executed by Chiquiznaque." "That is all for this week in that line," said Monipodio; "go on a few leaves further, and see what is to be done under the article of cudgelling." Rinconete soon found the place, and found written "Memorandum for cudgelling."

"First, The master of the Cloverflower eating-house a dozen stripes of the very best quality, at the rate of one crown each—time allowed six days; to

be executed by Maniferro." "You may soon rub that out," said Maniferro, "for this is the last night." "Is there any more, my boy?" asked Monipodio. "Yes, Sir," said Rinconete, "there is one more. The hunchbacked tailor, commonly called the Goldfinch, six stripes of the best quality, by order of the lady who left the necklace—to be executed by Desmochado (the cropper.)"

"I can't think how it is that Desmochado has not completed that order," said Monipodio, "the time has been up these two days." "I met him yesterday," said Maniferro, "and he told me the hunchback had been ill and was confined to his house." "Ah! I thought so;" returned the master, "for I always esteemed Desmochado a good artist and punctual in his obligations. There is no more, boy; pass on to common assaults." Rinconete found in another page as follows:—"Memorandum of common business," such as "blacking the face with a bottle of ink"—"nailing a horn over the doors of cuckolds"—"pretences at assassination"—"false alarms." "That is enough," said Monipodio; "I undertake all that business, because I make it a rule to keep secret little affairs of delicacy; and would rather nail up twenty horns, than give intelligence of one." The business of the day being then concluded, the names of the new members were entered into the book, during which one of the old respectable-looking gentlemen returned, to inform the professor that he had seen the gentleman from Malaga, who informed him that he was so much improved in his art, that now he should not be afraid to play with the very devil, and would wager that he could cheat him with clean cards. He had been prevented from waiting on the master since his tour by illness; but should not fail to be at the general rendezvous on Sunday morning. "I always said that Lovillo would arrive at eminence in his profession," said Monipodio: "he has the best hands I ever saw; and to be a good artist we must have good tools." "I have likewise seen the Jew who acts the clergyman," said the venerable reporter: "he has taken lodgings in the same house with some people whom he hopes to tempt at play; but he will not fail to attend on Sunday." "Ah! the Jew is a great scoundrel," said Monipodio: "I have long had great doubts of his honesty, by his never coming near me. Unless he conducts himself more orderly, I shall strip him of his gown. Have you anything more to say?" "Nothing more at present," returned the old gentleman."

"There, my children; take these fifty reals amongst you for the present," said the master, "and God bless and prosper you in your honest endeavours; and, on Sunday next, I shall expect every body present without fail, as I have a lecture to give you on the improvement of our art." He then embraced Rinconete and Cortadillo, giving them in charge to their former guide, to conduct them to the boundaries of the walks allotted to them, where they were to be accountable for every thing stolen from that district. The company then separated, and the two friends retired with their guide, highly edified and delighted with their visit.

The Twelve Green Russian Garnets

It was called the "Hôtel d'Italie et d'Angleterre" Why? Neither Italians nor Englishmen frequented it. Nor had M. Achille, its proprietor, ever visited these countries except in imagination. Why not "Peking and Timbuctoo"?

It possessed a terrace extending to the river, where it was a delight to dine on summer evenings, especially if one selected a table by the railing, from which one could see the reflections of the lights on the bridge and hear the lapping of little waves against the wall. Its front was overwhelmed by vines, which almost entirely obscured the letters of its Anglo-Italian appellation, and dropped their leaves and blossoms on the awning sheltering tables on either side of the entrance.

Seated at one of these tables behind the protecting row of box trees, his hands clasped over his white waistcoat, Inspector Joly could observe people walking in the shade of the *allée* or gossiping on the stone seats. M. Joly preferred society to solitude. He loved movement and the sun. Under ordinary circumstances he would certainly have been amused at the little army of school children, their knapsacks bulging with books, gathered in awe about the yellow omnibus, which, after so many fruitless journeys to the station beyond the bridge, had returned groaning under such a load of baggage that its passage beneath the low arch of the clock-tower had been accomplished only by a miracle of skill.

M. Achille was beside himself with importance. His entire first floor had been taken. When not adding to the confusion by the multiplicity of his orders, he stood in an attitude of silent contemplation which reminded one of the coloured print in the *salle-à-manger* —Napoleon watching the preparations for the embarkation of the army at Boulogne.

All this tumult, however, failed to interest M. Joly. He was reflecting. He had come to Freyr to make an important arrest, and as his hand closed upon the criminal an order from Paris had set this criminal free. M. Joly respected authority, but he was annoyed. He did not approve of pardons. Society was of more importance than the individual. According to his theory, when one has once definitely entered the criminal class one remains there. To open the cage door is to let loose the hawk. For the woman who had set the machinery of mercy in motion, however, he had conceived a profound respect, having fallen in twenty-four hours under the spell of that public sentiment of Freyr which took it for granted that whatever the Countess Anne did was right. Sitting alone behind the box trees, M. Joly shrugged his shoulders with the air of Pilate washing his hands of all responsibility.

Meanwhile a *valet de chambre* in a green apron, having dismantled the

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pyramid of baggage of the lesser objects which decorated its sides, assisted by the driver of the yellow omnibus, was attacking the enormous trunks which formed its core.

"Yes," M. Achille was saying in answer to a question from the *sergent de ville,* "an American family—monsieur, his secretary, madame, mademoiselle, the valet of monsieur, and two maids."

"*Sapristi!* it is a caravan," commented the *sergent.* "From America! from Brazil probably, or Chile!"

"No, from North America, from New York."

"Ah, what a people! to incommode themselves, to cross the sea——"

"Nowadays it is nothing," interrupted M. Achille loftily.

"There is always the danger of shipwreck, to say nothing of seasickness. I prefer travel by land," persisted the *sergent,* whose journeying, to and fro, under the lindens of the *allée,* resembled those of the pendulum.

If M. Joly observed and heard all this, it was from force of habit, for he gave no sign. Mechanically he looked at his watch—two o'clock; there was still an hour before the train. Rising, he took a few turns back and forth under the awning, still preoccupied, his hands crossed behind him. On the terrace a young officer was reading the feuilleton of the *Echo de Paris.* At his feet a little girl with a wooden shovel was excavating for hidden treasure, regardless of the consequences to her white frock. Leaning against his chair was a red parasol, whose owner was crumbling M. Achille's bread to the minnows at the foot of the wall, her pointed shoes projecting through the railing. The picture was a pretty one, and M. Joly adored the picturesque. When off duty, as it were, he found infinite relief in idealizing. Seeing him contemplating this scene, one expected to hear him exclaim, *"Que c' est beau, l'amour et la paix!"* But he only shrugged his shoulders again, crossed the terrace to the bureau, and demanded his bill.

"Monsieur does not wait for the omnibus?"

"No, I prefer to walk."

Just beyond the box trees, leaning amicably against the side wall of M. Achille's establishment, was a little shop of one story bearing the sign "Perrin—Antiquaire." M. Joly stopped before its one dingy window, not because he was interested in antiquities, but because he had time to spare, when suddenly his round eyes, wandering over the motely collection of bric-à-brac, became fixed, riveted, upon an object suspended by a string from one of the shelves. It was a Japanese gold coin, rectangular in shape, surrounded by twelve green Russian garnets.

M. Joly had an astonishing memory, which stored up automatically impressions of no apparent importance. This lumberhouse of unforgotten things, so invaluable to one of his profession, had not infrequently afforded him precious assistance. At this moment he had precisely the air of a man searching for something in a heap of rubbish. Yes! now he remembered. The recollections evoked by this object dangling from its string had arranged themselves in their proper places. Madame Raymonde, living in the Impasse Bertrand,—one of those pieces of wreckage, the press had said, which storms leave stranded in obscure places,—found dead one

morning in her room. The medical examiner had reported death from natural causes, the autopsy having revealed a weak heart. The dead woman had no known enemies, no visitors, no acquaintances even. Robbery was impossible, for she possessed nothing. So the affair was forgotten.

But M. Joly had not forgotten. Standing before this window, his eyes half closed, he had succeeded in dragging out from his storehouse a fact to which these green garnets gave a new significance. Contrary to all the evidence, a neighbour occupying an adjoining room had insisted that Madame Raymonde's death was not a natural one. Why? Had she seen any one? No. Had she heard anything? No. But Madame Raymonde possessed a jewel, and this jewel had disappeared. She had seen it once only, by accident, when madame was dressing, concealed in her bosom beneath her dress, and could therefore give but the vaguest description of it; but on one point she was persistent—it was of gold, with a border of stones like green flames. This theory, contributed by an outsider, the police treated with scant courtesy. The story was pronounced incredible, and the jewel a myth. Jewels were invented for display, not concealment. There was nothing to prove that madame possessed any such ornament at the time of her death. No one else had seen it and it was impossible to possess what never had been seen.

M. Joly smiled as he recalled this conclusion. Professional pride did not prevent him from smiling in secret at the mistakes of his colleagues. Was it, indeed, a mistake? One circumstance certainly had given body to suspicion. According to the version in the press, just before her death Madame Raymonde had engaged a *bonne* and this *bonne* had disappeared as completely as the jewel. It was not possible to pronounce the *bonne* also a myth, yet every effort to discover her had proved fruitless, and M. Joly knew from experience that when the police do not succeed they forget. He admitted that to connect this bit of jewelry with the events of the Impasse Bertrand was a pure speculation; but, methodical as he was, he believed in irresistible impulses—and opened M. Perrin's door.

For a quarter of an hour he examined in turn a Zaghwan embroidery, a Louis XV snuffbox, a decanter of La Granja glass, learning in the meanwhile that M. Perrin had an establishment in Paris, 117 Rue Lafayette. About to take his leave, he paused a moment at the window.

"It is curious, this," he said, detaching the garnet pin from its string.

"It is nothing, it is modern," remarked the shopkeeper, reaching for a chain of seed-pearls spaced with Indian amethysts.

"But it amuses me. At what do you value it?"

"Two hundred francs."

"Come, now, these are garnets, not emeralds." M. Joly was an expert in precious stones.

"That is true," admitted M. Perrin, with increased respect, "but——"

"You have a record of your purchases," interrupted M. Joly curtly.

"Certainly."

"That is prudent. Let us see it. Here is my card."

Having adjusted his spectacles and

examined the card, the hesitation of M. Perrin disappeared.

No. 1798. *Bought of Jean Dufresnes, concierge,* 5 *Impasse Bertrand.*

Then followed the date and a character in cipher indicating the price.

"Good," said M. Joly, taking a hundred-franc note from the folds of his pocketbook and putting in its place the garnet pin. "You have your professional secrets and I have mine. Good-day, Monsieur Perrin."

"Good day, Monsieur l'Inspecteur."

Alone in the compartment of a second-class carriage M. Joly smiled again. He stood for a while at the window watching the receding meadows of Freyr, then ensconcing himself in a corner opened his pocketbook. It was most certainly a curious thing—this Japanese coin, with its strange characters and green garnets ranged along its sides. No jeweler would invent a combination so unconventional, so meaningless. And precisely because so unconventional, it must have a meaning—a meaning due to some exceptional circumstance, some personal experience, which it was perhaps designed as a gift to commemorate and keep in perpetual remembrance. Why else should this strange ornament lie concealed in a woman's bosom? M. Joly did not share with some of his colleagues their scorn for speculation. For the very reason that certain facts were missing he found speculation a necessity. He maintained that the *rôle* of the imagination was as important for him as for the scientist, whose hypothesis is a fire-ball thrown out into the outlying dark—to illuminate that darkness, not to attract attention to itself by its own brilliancy. His preliminary inspection completed, he took out his microscope. Ah! by turning slightly one of the garnets a spring was released and the back slid gently in its grooves. Inside? Nothing. His curiosity satisfied, he composed himself in his corner, folded his hands, closed his eyes, and went to sleep.

When M. Joly inquired for the *concierge* at No. 5 Impasse Bertrand, an old man sitting before the doorway in the sun rose and took off his hat.

"You are Monsieur Dufresnes?"

"At your service, monsieur."

The man leaned heavily upon a stick, his hat trembling in his hand. Beneath his thin white hair a pair of faded blue eyes produced in M. Joly a kind of shock, for this benevolent face assuredly did not conform to the criminal type. In abandoning one theory M. Joly said to himself, "Come, come, now you are forming another." Then aloud, "You have been here a long time?"

"A long time, monsieur."

"Perhaps, then, you can tell me something about one of your former lodgers."

"It is possible."

"Madame Raymonde."

"Ah."

"Why do you say 'ah'?"

"Your pardon, but—you knew Madame Raymonde?"

"Let us say I am a relation," said M. Joly.

M. Dufresnes made no reply. He seemed dazed, looking toward the door of the lodge as if appealing for help.

"Shall we go in?" said M. Joly, leading the way.

A woman was standing before the charcoal fire, a spoon in her hand. "My wife," said M. Dufresnes. She was much younger than he. Her face re-

tained a certain freshness. It was a pleasant face, even a happy one. "Marie, monsieur is a relation of Madame Raymonde. He has come to make some inquiries."

"Ah." The woman laid down her spoon, wiping her hand on her apron.

"Why do you say 'ah'?" repeated M. Joly.

"I did not know that Madame Raymonde had any relations."

"One always has relations," smiled Monsieur Joly.

"That is true," observed M. Dufresnes.

His wife gave him a quick glance of impatience. In the pause which followed, a clock ticking conscientiously on the mantel seemed to be saying, "What next! what next!"

"She died very suddenly," remarked M. Joly, taking a chair.

"What is it you wish to know?" exclaimed the woman, almost fiercely, approaching her visitor, her hands on her hips.

"It is so dark here. Shall we have a little light?" M. Joly spoke in his most affable manner. There was but one small window and he abhorred shadows. The woman obeyed sullenly, placing the lamp on the table among the vegetables laid out for the evening soup.

"What do I wish to know?" repeated M. Joly, taking from his pocketbook the green garnet pin and laying it softly beside the lamp on the table. "I wish to know what price Monsieur Perrin paid you for this."

M. Dufresne's eyes were glued upon the garnets, shining in the dull light of the lamp; his wife's, fixed upon M. Joly, asked, "Who are you and what do you want?"

"I am Inspector Joly," he said.

The woman's eyes filled with anxiety. Even to the innocent the presence of the police is disturbing. One begins to imagine vaguely some unsuspected danger, some forgotten incident, some terrible mistake. Suspicion affrights innocence as accusation terrifies guilt.

"Your husband is ill."

The woman turned quickly, leading the trembling man to the recess, where he sank into a chair. "It is nothing," she said reassuringly; "I will talk with monsieur."

M. Joly was perplexed by the collapse of the man, by the calmness of the woman, standing between him and the alcove in the attitude of an animal defending its young.

"Sit down," he said politely.

She took the chair indicated, waiting, her hands folded in her lap, as if to say: "Interrogate *me*."

"Well, proceed," said M. Joly. There was in his tone none of the authority with which he had addressed the shopman. "Tell me all that you know about Madame Raymonde. You have nothing to fear."

She began without reserve, in a low voice and an accent of sincerity. The first shock of alarm gone, the words came freely, as from one who, long troubled by some secret burden, had expected the hour of deliverance.

"Madame came alone, in May. She lived very quietly, doing her own work, going out always at nightfall to make her purchases."

"The evening is not a favourable time to visit the markets," observed M. Joly.

"That is true. I also remarked that.

But madame was not communicative. If I questioned her she became silent. Regularly every week she paid the rent. At other times, in passing, she would say, 'Good-evening, Madame Dufresnes,' and I, 'Good-evening, Madame Raymonde,' that was all. The only person in whom she showed interest was my little Rosalie, whom she would send for whenever possible Often I asked, 'What does Madame Raymonde say to you up there, Rosalie?' 'She sews, and kisses me and tells me stories.' 'What stories?' 'Of great plains and forests where are wolves and much snow.' "

"She was a Russian?"

"I do not know, monsieur. She spoke French as I do. At first she was not cheerful. She had always the same anxious expression. Afterward she became more tranquil and smiled at me in passing. 'Madame is better,' I said to her one day. 'I shall leave you this week; I am going home,' she replied gayly. That evening when she returned she was much agitated. It was the 11th of June. I remember the day well because on Sunday of that week my Rosalie went to her first communion. It was not her habit to come into the lodge. I thought she had received some bad news. 'What has happened?' I said to her, seeing her look about like an animal that is hunted. She took my hands in hers, which were cold. 'Dear madame,' she said, 'I beg of you to listen to me'; then she took this"—Madame Dufresnes touched the garnet pin—"from beneath her dress, opened it, and showed me a paper within. 'If anything should happen to me—' 'What should happen to you, madame?' I said. Her manner terrified me. 'No one can tell what may happen. Is it so uncommon a thing to die? See, this is how it opens,' showing me and pressing the pin into my hand; 'promise me, if anything should happen, to deliver this paper tomorrow to the person whose address is written on the back.' What could I do! At such moments one promises everything. I thought her mad. Well, I promised; she embraced me and was gone. Afterward I regretted. I said to myself: 'If, indeed, something should happen, something terrible! It is better not to be mixed up in such matters.' Scarcely had she gone when a woman came asking for Madame Raymonde. 'The fourth floor, the door to the right,' I said. It was so sudden, so unexpected, I answered from habit. The jewel was still in my hand. But I collected myself. 'I think she is ill,' I said; 'I will go and see.' 'Certainly she is ill,' replied the woman; 'I am the *bonne* she has sent for,' and she went up the stairs. I told my husband it was strange madame had not informed me that this *bonne* should come. 'Why do you always worry about the affairs of other people?' he said. Nevertheless, all the night I reproached myself for allowing that woman to enter. But you know how it is, monsieur, when one is *concierge*. Some one comes, asks for some one, and one answers. Early in the morning I said to Rosalie, 'Go and see if anything is wrong with Madame Raymonde; there is a *bonne* there; ask if madame is ill.' When the child came back she said she had knocked, that there was no sound within. Ah, then I was truly alarmed. I called my husband. It was quite true, as Rosalie had said, there was no sound. The door was not locked; we went in together. The *bonne* was not there. Madame

was alone in bed. I touched her; she was dead. My husband ran into the street. I called for help. Then the police came, the doctor—the whole house was in an uproar."

The woman paused, as though she expected to be questioned.

"Go on," said M. Joly.

"The next day I went, as I had promised, to the Rue Saint-Denis, No. 219—the address on the paper. It was the 12th of June. I asked for Monsieur Meller. 'Yes,' said the concierge, 'he arrived last night.' His room was under the roof. 'Monsieur,' I said, 'I have come from Madame Raymonde.' 'Madame Raymonde?' he replied; 'I do not know her.' 'But I have a message from her,' I said, opening my hand in which was the pin. On seeing it, instantly his manner changed. 'It is well,' he said. Then I took out the paper, as madame had shown me, and gave it to him—but he did not look at it. 'Go,' he said; 'it is not good for you to be seen here.' I was so agitated I could not speak, even to say Madame Raymonde was dead. I was astonished also that he did not take the jewel."

She stopped abruptly.

"And you did not see what was written on this paper?"

"No, monsieur."

"That is all?"

"That is all, monsieur."

"And you said nothing to any one?"

"Why should I say anything? Did I know anything? All these events terrified me."

"You were not afraid to dispose of this?" asked M. Joly, replacing the garnet pin in his pocketbook.

"My husband said: 'Why not? No one knows of it. We will add the money to the dot of Rosalie.' It is the truth, monsieur."

M. Joly was buttoning up his coat. "I believe you," he said, simply.

"The devil!" he exclaimed, on the way home, "I forgot to ask how much Monsieur Perrin contributed to the dot of Rosalie."

Madame Joly generally shared her husband's professional perplexities. In this instance he had kept silent, all because of the hundred francs paid M. Perrin. It would, he knew, be impossible to explain how the green garnets came to occupy a place in his pocketbook without mentioning that sum. It must not be supposed that these two were not of one mind. On the contrary, the same ambition animated them both, this ambition being a sort of castle in Spain to be realized when, at a certain indefinite age, M. Joly should retire from active work. Having no children, all their economies had this castle in Spain in view—a little villa, in a garden, inclosed by a high wall. Every night, after pulling his night cap well over his ears and closing his eyes, M. Joly took a key from his pocket, and having paused just long enough to read the word "Monrepos" in white letters on a blue ground beside the gate, opened the latter cautiously and closed it proudly behind him. Straight before him was a gravel path, with a basin midway between the gate and the house. Other paths meandered between parterres—to each one of which he had assigned its particular arrangement of flowers—on one side to an arbour where he would pause again to sip an imaginary syrup or smoke an imaginary cigar; on the other to a well, destined to furnish the water necessary for the plants.

Having finished his cigar and listened to the music of the fountain, M. Joly began his duties as gardener, and all this required so much time that he invariably fell asleep before reaching the *perron* of the house—which thus remained a veritable castle in Spain.

But, on the night of his return from the Impasse Bertrand, he was not thinking of "Monrepos." Who was this woman without resources who paid her rent regularly and whose death, originally the sole object of his inquiries, opened the door to a greater mystery? What was the message, so jealously guarded, delivered to the lodger of the Rue Saint-Denis? Long after Madame Joly had fallen asleep he groped alone in the obscurity of conjectures. He knew that he was not dealing with the amateur who blunders into the clutches of the police as a young partridge flutters into the jaws of the fox; nor with the ordinary criminal who, destitute of originality, commits over and over the same crimes from the same motives by the same methods, and whose capture is only an incident of professional routine.

M. Joly sometimes obeyed impulses, but he did not wait for them; nor did he trust to chance. He began, therefore, a careful investigation of No. 219 Rue Saint-Denis. Within a week the name, age, occupation, associates, habits of its every occupant were in his possession. Among these names was that of M. Meller. The information concerning the latter was incomplete. Was he a commercial traveler? For he was to be seen only for a few days, usually about the middle of the month, and in the interim disappeared completely from sight. M. Joly contended that his best thoughts came, not logically from established facts, but from God knows where—motherless and fatherless offspring. It was thus that the idea came to him to call upon M. Meller on the 12th of the month. He treated this idea at first with contempt, then with incredulity, and finally seeing that it refused to depart, he adopted and justified it. Madame Dufresnes had delivered the message on that date—M. Meller was in the habit of returning the middle of the month—and about the Japanese coin were twelve Russian garnets. His ordinary procedure would have been to examine M. Meller's room in his absence. One often obtains interesting information from a room whose tenant is absent. But he resisted this temptation, and on the morning of the 12th descended the slope of the Boulevard and turned into the Rue Saint-Denis. Believing with Napoleon that Providence is on the side of the stronger battalions, he took with him two agents of the secret service.

Yes, M. Meller occupied a room on the court, the fourth floor. Yes, M. Meller was in. "Shall I accompany monsieur?" added the concierge.

"I don't need you," said M. Joly.

"Very well—the second door from the landing, on the left."

At the head of the stairs, M. Joly said to the agents: "You will remain in the corridor. Should I need you, I will call."

At the door he knocked gently.

"Come in," said a voice.

He turned the knob, went in, and closed the door behind him. A man was sitting at a table, reading. M. Joly observed him attentively—a slight figure, narrow-chested, with stooping

shoulders, reassuringly insignificant. On the pale face, however, was written tenacity and resolution.

"Monsieur Meller?"

"That is my name."

M. Joly took out his pocketbook. He had quite the manner of a lawyer announcing to some poor devil an unexpected legacy.

"Permit me to sit down," he said, drawing a chair to the opposite side of the table. "I have a message for you." At the sight of the garnet pin the man started, but said nothing. "Here it is." M. Joly released the spring carefully and took out a small roll of paper.

"Very well," said the man, without moving.

"But, monsieur, I beg you to examine it. Such were my instructions."

The man hesitated, then opened the roll. As he proceeded his face assumed a deadly pallor—the paper was a blank. He sprang trembling to his feet.

"Sit down, monsieur," said M. Joly, taking a pistol from his pocket and laying it on the table before him. The man uttered a groan that was terrible. He was not looking at M. Joly. He appeared to be invoking an invisible presence.

"Sit down," thundered M. Joly. "Do you wish me to put a hole through you?"

"If you wish, fire." The voice was that of a man indifferent to consequences, because hopelessly trapped. At the same instant he carried his hand quickly to his waistcoat pocket.

"Ah, wretch!" shouted M. Joly, dashing aside the table and seizing the man's wrist. "Help! help!"

At his cry the agents burst open the door. To their amazement they saw a man, his arms pinioned to his sides, in the strong grasp of their chief. The next moment this man lay panting on the floor, helpless, handcuffed, his feet bound. Beside him was a broken vial from which exhaled the bitter odour of almonds.

"Dame!" muttered M. Joly, wiping the perspiration from his brow, "here is another who came near having a weak heart."

"You are hurt, Monsieur l'Inspecteur?"

He shook them off roughly. "Ah, rascal!" apostrophizing the figure on the floor, "we nearly made a mess of it." He examined the room feverishly—the closet, in which hung only an overcoat, a wooden box studded with nails, containing a few insignificant articles of wearing apparel. The drawer of the table was empty, the book, a second-hand copy of "Monte Cristo." Watching these proceedings, the man on the floor smiled. In his pockets—nothing. Beside the broken vial lay the garnet pin, and near-by the pistol. M. Joly replaced these in the deep pocket of his overcoat. Then he sat down, in his customary attitude, his hands clasped over his waistcoat. His little plan had miscarried. He had expected to discover something, and he had discovered nothing. Often perplexed, for the first time in his career he was bewildered. But he understood now the sudden death of Madame Raymonde. What people! to bar with their own bodies, like desperate defenders of a fortress, the approach of the enemy. And this fortress which they defended, what did it contain?

The man's eyes were closed now. M Joly, who had put on his hat, took it

off, gazing at the pale face with involuntary respect.

A timid knock interrupted his reflections. Opening the door, he saw his own servant.

"Monsieur, madame wishes me to tell you that Monsieur le Préfet has sent for you, and that it is urgent."

"Good," replied M. Joly gruffly, shutting the door in the girl's face.

Although her husband had never received that thrust of the knife in the back, the fear of which often kept Madame Joly awake while her consort was watering the flowers of "Monrepos," yet she had never permitted him to leave his apartment without extracting from him the secret of his destination. While she was brushing his coat and straightening his cravat, there invariably occured the following colloquy: "At what time will you return?" "Really now, how should I know?" "You are going—?" "How can I tell! you know very well—" "But if any one should inquire for you." "True," and here M. Joly would confess his destination; after which madame would say, "Be prudent," and he would answer, "Assuredly." It was thus that the message from the prefect came to be delivered in the Rue Saint-Denis.

"Remain here, touch nothing," he said to the agents, "and"—pointing to the body on the floor—"pay attention; he is capable of something. I will go for the authorities."

On the way to the prefecture he was alternately elated and depressed. He held the end of a thread, that was certain; but he did not know where it led. What did M. Levigne want of him? Usually a summons of this kind meant some delicate mission. It was impossible that it should have any connection with the events which had just transpired, and to be interrupted in this manner, at a critical moment, annoyed him. He knew that the prefect thought well of him. He was not surprised, then, when his name was announced, to hear the familiar words: "Ah, it is Monsieur Joly. Let him enter."

M. Levigne was writing. He did not look up, nor did he cease writing. In the far corner of the room sat a woman, to whom, as etiquette required, M. Joly paid no attention. The silence, broken only by the scratching of the quill pen, was disconcerting. It was a reception to which he was not accustomed.

"It seems," said M. Levigne, at length, "that you are interested in the affair of the Impasse Bertrand."

"The devil!" thought M. Joly, "the place was watched."

"That in your leisure moments"—M. Joly winced at the fine note of irony in the prefect's voice—"you are making inquiries for a woman who disappeared there. Well"—with a wave of the pen to the figure behind him—"here she is."

M. Joly began to understand why the disappearance of this woman had failed to excite the zeal of the police. He began also to realize the excess of his own. It was an excellent opportunity, however, to display his mastery of surprise, therefore he remained immobile and silent.

"We are not so stupid here." For the first time M. Levigne laid down his pen and, leaning back in his chair, fixed his eyes upon the inspector. "I repeat, we are not so stupid here as some appear to believe. We do not run after

our own agents. Furthermore, we have better employment for your leisure." He paused, as if to allow these words to sink the deeper into M. Joly's consciousness. A vision of "Monrepos" receding into the distance passed before the latter's eyes. "The preliminaries being settled," resumed M. Levigne, taking up a memorandum from his desk, "let us pass to certain facts of which you are ignorant. On the 2d of May it came to our knowledge that the Paris representative of the Russian police was selected for assassination; that a member of the Central Committee in St. Petersburg, with instructions for its agent here, would arrive by the express of the 5th. Unfortunately this person——"

"Madame Raymonde!" muttered M. Joly, under his breath.

"What do you say?"

"I said, 'I understand,' Monsieur le Préfet."

"Unfortunately this person left the train beyond the frontier and for a time eluded us—madame will explain to you in what manner. We had counseled our Russian colleague to go and amuse himself elsewhere for a time. But he has returned, and it seems the farce is about to recommence. It would be mortifying to invite this gentleman to take so soon another vacation. What you have to do is to discover and apprehend this agent. I say apprehend, for these people have an inconvenient way of eluding the interrogations of justice. Madame, here, has given us a body—what we want is a man."

"I have both," said M. Joly.

"You have both! What do you mean?"

"I mean, Monsieur le Préfet, that the agent you seek is called Meller; that at this moment he lies on the floor of a room in the Rue Saint-Denis, No. 219, bound hand and foot and is at your service."

"Not possible!" exclaimed the prefect, less skillful than his subordinate in mastering surprise. "Explain yourself."

Concisely, modestly, as if making a commonplace report, M. Joly related the story of the green garnets from the hour when he first saw them dangling from the shelf in M. Perrin's window till, having finished his recital, he laid them respectfully on the prefect's desk.

M. Levigne examined them attentively, released the spring, and closed it again, with a deep sigh of mingled relief and astonishment.

"You have done a good piece of work, Monsieur Joly. For the present this belongs to the State. But we shall not forget you."

"Monsier le Prèfet," said M. Joly, twisting his hat in his hand, "if I might repeat a remark you have just deigned to make—"

"Repeat it."

"That we are not so stupid here as some would appear to believe."

The Night of Gems

UNDER the stars of a tepid, scented night of August of 1784, Prince Louis de Rohan, Cardinal of Strasbourg, Grand Almoner of France, made his way with quickened pulses through the Park of Versailles to a momentous assignation in the Grove of Venus.

This illustrious member of an illustrious House, that derived from both the royal lines of Valois and Bourbon, was a man in the prime of life, of a fine height, still retaining something of the willowy slenderness that had been his in youth, and of a gentle, almost womanly, beauty of countenance.

In a gray cloak and a round, gray hat with gold cords, followed closely by two shadowy attendant figures, he stepped briskly amain, eager to open those gates across the path of his ambition, locked against him hitherto by the very hands from which he now went to receive the key.

He deserves your sympathy, this elegant Cardinal-Prince, who had been the victim of the malice and schemings of the relentless Austrian Empress since the days when he represented the King of France at the Court of Vienna.

The state he had kept there had been more than royal—and royal in the dazzling French manner, which was perturbing to a woman of Marie Thérèse's solid German notions. His hunting-parties, his supper-parties, the fêtes he gave upon every occasion, the worldly inventiveness, the sumptuousness and reckless extravagance that made each of these affairs seem like a supplement to "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments," the sybaritic luxury of his surroundings, the incredible prodigality of his expenditure, all served profoundly to scandalize and embitter the Empress.

That a priest in gay, secular clothes should hunt the stag on horseback filled her with horror at his levity; that he should flirt discreetly with the noble ladies of Vienna made her despair of his morals; whilst his personal elegance and irresistible charm were proofs to her of a profligacy that perverted the Court over which she ruled.

She laboured for the extinction of his pernicious brilliance, and intrigued for his recall. She made no attempt to conceal her hostility, nor did she love him any the better because he met her frigid haughtiness with an ironical urbanity that seemed ever to put her in the wrong. And then one day he permitted his wit to be bitingly imprudent.

"Marie Thérèse," he wrote to D'Aiguillon, "holds in one hand a handkerchief to receive her tears for the misfortunes of oppressed Poland, and in the other a sword to continue its partition."

To say that in this witticism lay one of the causes of the French Revolution may seem at first glance an outrageous overstatement. Yet it is certain that,

From Historical Nights Entertainments.

but for that imprudent phrase, the need would never have arisen that sent Rohan across the Park of Versailles on that August night to an assignation that in the sequel was to place a terrible weapon in the hands of the Revolutionary party.

D'Aiguillon had published the gibe. It had reached the ears of Marie Antoinette, and from her it had traveled back to her mother in Vienna. It aroused in the Empress a resentment and a bitterness that did not rest until the splendid Cardinal-Prince was recalled from his embassy. It did not rest even then. By the ridicule to which the gibe exposed her—and if you know Marie Thérèse at all, you can imagine what that meant—it provoked a hostility that was indefatigably to labour against him.

The Cardinal was ambitious, he had confidence in his talents and in the driving force of his mighty family, and he looked to become another Richelieu or Mazarin, the first Minister of the Crown, the empurpled ruler of France, the guiding power behind the throne. All this he looked confidently to achieve; all this he might have achieved but for the obstacle that Marie Thérèse's resentment flung across his path. The Empress saw to it that, through the person of her daughter, her hatred should pursue him even into France.

Obedient ever to the iron will of her mother, sharing her mother's resentment, Marie Antoinette exerted all her influence to thwart this Cardinal whom her mother had taught her to regard as a dangerous, unprincipled man.

On his return from Vienna bearing letters from Marie Thérèse to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the Cardinal found himself coldly received by the dull King, and discouraged from remaining at Court, whilst the Queen refused to grant him so much as the audience necessary for the delivery of these letters, desiring him to forward them instead.

The chagrined Cardinal had no illusions. He beheld here the hand of Marie Thérèse controlling Marie Antoinette, and, through Marie Antoinette, the King himself. Worse followed. He who had dreamt himself another Richelieu could only with difficulty obtain the promised position of Grand Almoner of France, and this solely as a result of the powerful and insistent influence exerted by his family.

He perceived that if he was to succeed at all he must begin by softening the rigorous attitude which the Queen maintained toward him. To that end he addressed himself. But three successive letters he wrote to the Queen remained unanswered. Through other channels persistently he begged for an audience that he might come in person to express his regrets for the offending indiscretion. But the Queen remained unmoved, ruled ever by the Austrian Empress, who through her daughter sought to guide the affairs of France.

Rohan was reduced to despair, and then in an evil hour his path was crossed by Jeanne de la Motte de Valois, who enjoyed the reputation of secretly possessing the friendship of the Queen, exerting a sort of back-stair influence, and who lived on that reputation.

As a drowning man clutches at a straw, so the Cardinal-Prince Louis de Rohan, Grand Almoner of France, Landgrave of Alsace, Commander of the Or-

der of the Holy Ghost, clutched at this faiseuse d'affaires to help him in his desperate need.

Jeanne de la Motte de Valois—perhaps the most astounding adventuress that ever lived by her wits and her beauty—had begun life by begging her bread in the streets. She laid claim to left-handed descent from the royal line of Valois, and, her claim supported by the Marchioness Boulainvilliers, who had befriended her, she had obtained from the Crown a small pension, and had married the unscrupulous Marc Antoine de la Motte, a young soldier in the Burgundy regiment of the Gendarmerie.

Later, in the autumn of 1786, her protectress presented her to Cardinal de Rohan. His Eminence, interested in the lady's extraordinary history, in her remarkable beauty, vivacity, and wit, received the de la Mottes at his sumptuous château at Saverne, near Strasbourg, heard her story in greater detail, promised his protection, and as an earnest of his kindly intentions obtained for her husband a captain's commission in the Dragoons.

Thereafter you see the de la Mottes in Paris and at Versailles, hustled from lodging to lodging for failure to pay what they owe; and finally installed in a house in the Rue Neuve Saint-Giles. There they kept a sort of state, spending lavishly, now the money borrowed from the Cardinal, or upon the Cardinal's security; now the proceeds of pawned goods that had been bought on credit, and of other swindles practised upon those who were impressed by the lady's name and lineage and the patronage of the great Cardinal which she enjoyed.

To live on your wits is no easy matter. It demands infinite address, coolness, daring, and resource—qualities which Madame de la Motte possessed in the highest degree, so that, harassed and pressed by creditors, she yet contrived to evade their attacks and to present a calm and, therefore, confidence-inspiring front to the world.

The truth of Madame de la Motte de Valois's reputation for influence at Court was never doubted. There was nothing in the character of Marie Antoinette to occasion such doubts. Indiscreet in many things, Her Majesty was most notoriously so in her attachments, as witness her intimacy with Madame de Polignac and the Princesse de Lamballe. And the public voice had magnified—as it will—those indiscretions until it had torn her character into shreds.

The fame of the Countess Jeanne de Valois—as Madame de la Motte now styled herself—increasing, she was employed as an intermediary by place-seekers and people with suits to prefer, who gratefully purchased her promises to interest herself on their behalf at Court.

And then into her web of intrigue blundered the Cardinal de Rohan, who, as he confessed, "was completely blinded by his immense desire to regain the good graces of the Queen." She aroused fresh hope in his despairing heart by protesting that, as some return for all the favours she had received from him, she would not rest until she had disposed the Queen more favourably toward him.

Later came assurances that the Queen's hostility was melting under her persuasions, and at last she announced that she was authorized by Her Majesty to invite him to submit the justification which so long and so vainly he had sought permission to present.

Rohan, in a vertigo of satisfaction, indited by his justification, forwarded it to the Queen by the hand of the Countess, and some days later received a note in the Queen's hand upon blue-edged paper adorned by the lilies of France.

"I rejoice," wrote Marie Antoinette, "to find at last that you were not in fault. I cannot yet grant you the audience you desire, but as soon as the circumstances allow of it I shall let you know. Be discreet."

Upon the advice of the Countess de Valois, His Eminence sent a reply expressive of his deep gratitude and joy.

Thus began a correspondence between Queen and Cardinal which continued regularly for a space of three months, growing gradually more confidential and intimate. As time passed, his solicitations of an audience became more pressing, until at last the Queen wrote announcing that, actuated by esteem and affection for him who had so long been kept in banishment, she herself desired the meeting. But it must be secret. An open audience would still be premature; he had numerous enemies at Court, who, thus forewarned, might so exert themselves against him as yet to ruin all.

To receive such a letter from a beautiful woman, and that woman a queen whose glories her inaccessibility had magnified a thousandfold in his imagination must have all but turned the Cardinal's head. The secrecy of the correspondence, culminating in a clandestine meeting, seemed to establish between them an intimacy impossible under other circumstances.

Into the warp of his ambition was now woven another, tenderly romantic though infinitely respectful, feeling.

You realize, I hope, the frame of mind in which the Cardinal-Prince took his way through that luminous, fragrant summer night towards the Grove of Venus. He went to lay the corner-stone of the proud edifice of his ambitions. To him it was a night of nights —a night of gems, he pronounced it, looking up into the jewelled vault of heaven. And in that phrase he was singularly prophetic.

By an avenue of boxwood and yoke-elm he entered into an open glade, in the middle of which there was a circle where the intended statue of Venus was never placed. But if the cold marble effigy of a goddess were absent, the warm, living figure of a queen stood, all in shimmering white amid the gloom, awaiting him.

Rohan checked a moment, his breath arrested, his pulses quickened. Then he sped forward, and, flinging off his wide-brimmed hat, he prostrated himself to kiss the hem of her white cambric gown. Something—a rose that she let fall—brushed lightly past his cheek. Reverently he recovered it, accounting it a tangible symbol of her favour, and he looked up into the proud, lovely face—which, although but dimly discernible, was yet unmistakable to him —protesting his gratitude and devotion.

He perceived that she was trembling, and caught the quiver in the voice that answered him.

"You may hope that the past will be forgiven."

And then, before he could drink more deeply of this cup of delight, came rapid steps to interrupt them. A slender man, in whom the Cardinal seemed to recognize the Queen's valet, Desclaux, thrust through the curtains of foliage into the grove.

"Quick, madame!" he exclaimed in agitation. "Madame la Comtesse and Mademoiselle d'Artois are approaching."

The Queen was whirled away, and the Cardinal discreetly effaced himself, his happiness tempered by chagrin at the interruption.

When, on the morrow, the Countess of Valois brought him a blue-bordered note with Her Majesty's wishes that he should patiently await a propitious season for his public restoration to royal favour, he resigned himself with the most complete and satisfied submission. Had he not the memory of her voice and the rose she had given him? Soon afterwards came a blue-bordered note in which Marie Antoinette advised him to withdraw to his Bishopric of Strasbourg until she should judge that the desired season of his reinstatement had arrived.

Obediently Rohan withdrew.

It was in the following December that the Countess of Valois's good offices at Court were solicited by a new client, and that she first beheld the famous diamond necklace.

It had been made by the Court jewellers of the Rue Vendôme—Böhmer and Bassenge—and intended for the Countess du Barry. On the assembling of its component gems Böhmer had laboured for five years and travelled all over Europe, with the result that he had achieved not so much a necklace as a blazing scarf of diamonds, of a splendour outrivalling any jewels that the world had ever seen.

Unfortunately, Böhmer was too long over the task. Louis XV died inopportunely, and the firm found itself with a necklace worth two million livres on its hands.

Hopes were founded upon Marie Antoinette's reputed extravagance. But the price appalled her, while Louis XVI met the importunities of the jeweller with the reply that the country needed a ship of war more urgently than a necklace.

Thereafter Böhmer offered it in various Courts of Europe, but always without success. Things were becoming awkward. The firm had borrowed heavily to pay for the stones, and anxiety seems to have driven Böhmer to the verge of desperation. Again he offered the necklace to the King, announcing himself ready to make terms, and to accept payment in instalments; but again it was refused.

Böhmer now became that pest to society, the man with a grievance that he must be venting everywhere. On one occasion he so far forgot himself as to intrude upon the Queen as she was walking in the gardens of the Trianon. Flinging himself upon his knees before her, he protested with sobs that he was in despair, and that unless she purchased the necklace he would go and drown himself. His tears left her unmoved to anything but scorn.

"Get up, Böhmer!" she bade him. "I don't like such scenes. I have refused the necklace, and I don't want to hear of it again. Instead of drowning yourself, break it up and sell the diamonds separately."

He did neither one nor the other, but continued to air his grievance; and among those who heard him was one Laporte, an impecunious visitor at the house of the Countess of Valois.

Böhmer had said that he would pay a thousand louis to any one who found him a purchaser for the necklace. That was enough to stir the needy Laporte. He mentioned the matter to the Countess, and enlisted her interest. Then he told Böhmer of her great influence with the Queen, and brought the jeweller to visit her with the necklace.

Dazzled by the fire of those gems, the Countess nevertheless protested—but in an arch manner calculated to convince Böhmer of the contrary—that she had no power to influence Her Majesty. Yet yielding with apparent reluctance to his importunities, she, nevertheless, ended by promising to see what could be done.

On January 3rd the Cardinal came back from Strasbourg. Correspondence with the Queen, through Madame de Valois, had continued through his absence, and now, within a few days of his return, an opportunity was to be afforded him of proving his readiness to serve Her Majesty, and of placing her under a profound obligation to him.

The Countess brought him a letter from Marie Antoinette, in which the Queen expressed her desire to acquire the necklace, but added that, being without the requisite funds at the moment, it would be necessary to settle the terms and arrange the instalments, which should be paid at intervals of three months. For this she required an intermediary who in himself would be a sufficient guarantee to the Böhmers, and she ended by inviting His Eminence to act on her behalf.

That invitation the Cardinal, who had been waiting ever since the meeting in the Grove of Venus for an opportunity of proving himself, accepted with alacrity.

And so, on January 24th, the Countess drives up to the Grand Balcon, the jewellers' shop in the Rue Vendôme. Her dark eyes sparkle, the lovely, piquant face is wreathed in smiles.

"Messieurs," she greets the anxious partners, "I think I can promise you that the necklace will very shortly be sold."

The jewellers gasp in the immensity of the hope her words arouse.

"The purchase," she goes on to inform them, "will be effected by a very great nobleman."

Bassenge bursts into voluble gratitude. She cuts it short.

"That nobleman is the Cardinal-Prince Louis de Rohan. It is with him that you will arrange the affair, and I advise you," she adds in a confidential tone, "to take every precaution, especially in the matter of the terms of payment that may be proposed to you. That is all, I think, messieurs. You will, of course, bear in mind that it is no concern of mine, and that I do not so much as want my name mentioned in connection with it."

"Perfectly, madame," splutters Böhmer, who is perspiring, although the air is cold—"perfectly! We understand,

and we are profoundly grateful. If—" His hands fumble nervously at a case. "If you would deign, madame, to accept this trifle as an earnest of our indebtedness, we——"

There is a tinge of haughtiness in her manner as she interrupts him.

"You do not appear to understand, Böhmer, that the matter does not at all concern me. I have done nothing," she insists; then, melting into smiles, "My only desire," she adds, "was to be of service to you."

And upon that she departs, leaving them profoundly impressed by her graciousness and still more by her refusal to accept a valuable jewel.

On the morrow the great nobleman she had heralded, the Cardinal himself, alighted at the Grand Balcon, coming, on the Queen's behalf, to see the necklace and settle the terms. By the end of the week the bargain was concluded. The price was fixed at 1,600,000 livres, which the Queen was to pay in four instalments extending over two years, the first falling due on the following August 1st.

These terms the Cardinal embodied in a note which he forwarded to Madame de la Motte, that they might be ratified by the Queen.

The Countess returned the note to him next day.

"Her Majesty is pleased and grateful," she announced, "and she approves of all that you have done. But she does not wish to sign anything."

On that point, however, the Cardinal was insistent. The magnitude of the transaction demanded it, and he positively refused to move further without Her Majesty's signature.

The Countess departed to return again on the last day of the month with the document completed as the Cardinal required, bearing now the signature "Marie Antoinette de France," and the terms marked "approved" in the Queen's hand.

"The Queen," Madame de la Motte informed him, "is making this purchase secretly, without the King's knowledge, and she particularly begs that this note shall not leave Your Eminence's hands. Do not, therefore, allow any one to see it."

Rohan gave the required promise, but, not conceiving that the Böhmers were included in it, he showed them the note and the Queen's signature when they came to wait upon him with the necklace on the morrow.

In the dusk of evening a closed carriage drew up at the door of Madame de la Motte Valois's lodging on the Place Dauphine at Versailles. Rohan alighted, and went upstairs with a casket under his arm.

Madame awaited him in a white-panelled, indifferently lighted room, to which there was an alcove with glass doors.

"You have brought the necklace?"

"It is here," he replied, tapping the box with his gloved hand.

"Her Majesty is expecting it to-night. Her messenger should arrive at any moment. She will be pleased with Your Eminence."

"That is all that I can desire," he answered, gravely; and sat down in answer to her invitation, the precious casket on his knees.

Waiting thus, they talked desultorily for some moments. At last came steps upon the stairs.

"Quick! The alcove!" she exclaimed.

"You must not be seen by Her Majesty's messenger."

Rohan, with ready understanding, a miracle of discretion, effaced himself into the alcove, through the glass doors of which he could see what passed.

The door was opened by madame's maid with the announcement:

"From the Queen."

A tall, slender young man in black, the Queens' attendant of that other night of gems—the night of the Grove of Venus—stepped quickly into the room, bowed like a courtier to Madame de la Motte, and presented a note.

Madame broke the seal, then begged the messenger to withdraw for a moment. When he had gone, she turned to the Cardinal, who stood in the doorway of the alcove.

"That is Desclaux, Her Majesty's valet," she said; and held out to him the note, which requested the delivery of the necklace to the bearer.

A moment later the messenger was reintroduced to receive the casket from the hands of Madame de la Motte. Within five minutes the Cardinal was in his carriage again, driving happily back to Paris with his dreams of a queen's gratitude and confidence.

Two days later, meeting Böhmer at Versailles, the Cardinal suggested to him that he should offer his thanks to the Queen for having purchased the necklace.

Böhmer sought an opportunity for this in vain. None offered. It was also in vain that he waited to hear that the Queen had worn the necklace. But he does not appear to have been anxious on that score. Moreover, the Queen's abstention was credibly explained by Madame de la Motte to Laporte with the statement that Her Majesty did not wish to wear the necklace until it was paid for.

With the same explanation she answered the Cardinal's inquiries in the following July, when he returned from a three months' sojourn in Strasbourg. And she took the opportunity to represent to him that one of the reasons why the Queen could not yet consider the necklace quite her own was that she found the price too high.

"Indeed, she may be constrained to return it, after all, unless the Böhmers are prepared to be reasonable."

If His Eminence was a little dismayed by this, at least any nascent uneasiness was quieted. He consented to see the jewellers in the matter, and on July 10th—three weeks before the first instalment was due—he presented himself at the Grand Balcon to convey the Queen's wishes to the Böhmers.

Böhmer scarcely troubled to prevent disgust from showing on his keen, swarthy countenance. Had not his client been a queen and her intermediary a cardinal, he would, no doubt, have afforded it full expression.

"The price agreed upon was already greatly below the value of the necklace," he grumbled. "I should never have accepted it but for the difficulties under which we have been placed by the purchase of the stones—the money we owe and the interest we are forced to pay. A further reduction is impossible."

The handsome Cardinal was suave, courtly, regretful, but firm. Since that was the case, there would be no alternative but to return the necklace.

Böhmer took fright. The annulment of the sale would bring him face to face with ruin. Reluctantly, feeling that he was being imposed upon, he reduced the price by two hundred thousand livres, and even consented to write the Queen the following letter, whose epistolary grace suggests the Cardinal's dictation:

MADAME,—We are happy to hazard the thought that our submission with zeal and respect to the last arrangement proposed constitutes a proof of our devotion and obedience to the orders of Your Majesty. And we have genuine satisfaction in thinking that the most beautiful set of diamonds in existence will serve to adorn the greatest and best of queens.

Now it happened that Böhmer was about to deliver personally to the Queen some jewels with which the King was presenting her on the occasion of the baptism of his nephew. He availed himself of that opportunity, two days later, personally to hand his letter to Her Majesty. But chance brought the Comptroller-General into the room before she had opened it, and as a result the jeweller departed while the letter was still unread.

Afterwards, in the presence of Madame de Campan, who relates the matter in her memoirs, the Queen opened the note, pored over it a while, and then, perhaps with vivid memories of Böhmer's threat of suicide:

"Listen to what that madman Böhmer writes to me," she said, and read the lines aloud. "You guessed the riddles in the 'Mercure' this morning. I wonder could you guess me this one."

And, with a half-contemptuous shrug, she held the sheet in the flame of one of the tapers that stood alight on the table for the purpose of sealing letters.

"That man exists for my torment," she continued. "He has always some mad notion in his head, and must always be visiting it upon me. When next you see him, pray convince him how little I care for diamonds."

And there the matter was dismissed.

Days passed, and then, a week before the instalment of 350,000 livres was due, the Cardinal received a visit from Madame de la Motte on the Queen's behalf.

"Her Majesty," madame announced, "seems embarrassed about the instalment. She does not wish to trouble you by writing about it. But I have thought of a way by which you could render yourself agreeable to her and, at the same time, set her mind at rest. Could you not raise a loan for the amount?"

Had not the Cardinal himself dictated to Böhmer a letter which Böhmer himself had delivered to the Queen, he must inevitably have suspected by now that all was not as it should be. But, satisfied as he was by that circumstance, he addressed himself to the matter which Madame de la Motte proposed. But, although Rohan was extraordinarily wealthy, he had ever been correspondingly lavish.

Moreover, to complicate matters, there had been the bankruptcy of his nephew, the Prince de Guimenée, whose debts had amounted to some three million livres. Characteristically, and for the sake of the family honour, Rohan

had taken the whole of this burden upon his own shoulders. Hence his resources were in a crippled condition, and it was beyond his power to advance so considerable a sum at such short notice. Nor did he succeed in obtaining a loan within the little time at his disposal.

His anxieties on this score were increased by a letter from the Queen which Madame de la Motte brought him on July 30th, in which Her Majesty wrote that the first instalment could not be paid until October 1st; but that on that date a payment of seven hundred thousand livres—half of the revised price—would unfailingly be made. Together with this letter, Madame de la Motte handed him thirty thousand livres, interest on the instalment due, with which to pacify the jewellers.

But the jewellers were not so easily to be pacified. Böhmer, at the end of his patience, definitely refused to grant the postponement or to receive the thirty thousand livres other than as on account of the instalment due.

The Cardinal departed in vexation. Something must be done at once, or his secret relations with the Queen would be disclosed, thus precipitating a catastrophe and a scandal. He summoned Madame de la Motte, flung her into a panic with his news and sent her away to see what she could do. What she actually did would have surprised him. Realizing that a crisis had been reached calling for bold measures, she sent for Bassenge, the milder of the two partners. He came to the Rue Neuve Saint-Giles, protesting that he was being abused.

"Abused?" quoth she, taking him up on the word. "Abused, do you say?" She laughed sharply. "Say duped, my friend; for that is what has happened to you. You are the victim of a swindle."

Bassenge turned white; his prominent eyes bulged in his rather pasty face.

"What are you saying, madame?" His voice was husky.

"The Queen's signature on the note in the Cardinal's possession is a forgery."

"A forgery! The Queen's signature? Oh, mon Dieu!" He stared at her, and his knees began to tremble. "How do you know, madame?"

"I have seen it," she answered.

"But—but——"

His nerveless limbs succumbing under him, he sank without ceremony to a chair that was opportunely near him. With the same lack of ceremony, mechanically, in a dazed manner, he mopped the sweat that stood in beads on his brow, then raised his wig and mopped his head.

"There is no need to waste emotion," said she composedly. "The Cardinal de Rohan is very rich. You must look to him. He will pay you."

"Will he?"

Hope and doubt were blended in the question.

"What else?" she asked. "Can you conceive that he will permit such a scandal to burst about his name and the name of the Queen?"

Bassenger saw light. The rights and wrongs of the case, and who might be the guilty parties, were matters of very secondary importance. What mattered was that the firm should recover the 1,400,000 livres for which the necklace had been sold; and Bassenge was quick

to attach full value to the words of Madame de la Motte.

Unfortunately for everybody concerned, including the jewellers themselves, Böhmer's mind was less supple. Panic-stricken by Bassenge's report, he was all for the direct method. There was no persuading him to proceed cautiously, and to begin by visiting the Cardinal. He tore away to Versailles at once, intent upon seeing the Queen. But the Queen, as we know, had had enough of Böhmer. He had to content himself with pouring his mixture of intercessions and demands into the ears of Madame de Campan.

"You have been swindled, Böhmer," said the Queen's lady promptly. "Her Majesty never received the necklace."

Böhmer would not be convinced. Disbelieving, and goaded to fury, he returned to Bassenge.

Bassenge, however, though perturbed, retained his calm. The Cardinal, he insisted, was their security, and it was impossible to doubt that the Cardinal would fulfil his obligations at all costs, rather than be overwhelmed by a scandal.

And this, no doubt, is what would have happened but for that hasty visit of Böhmer's to Versailles. It ruined everything. As a result of it, Böhmer was summoned to wait instantly upon the Queen in the matter of some paste buckles.

The Queen received the jeweller in private, and her greeting proved that the paste buckles were a mere pretext. She demanded to know the meaning of his words to Madame de Campan.

Böhmer could not rid himself of the notion that he was being trifled with. Had he not written and himself delivered to the Queen a letter in which he thanked her for purchasing the necklace, and had not that letter remained unanswered—a silent admission that the necklace was in her hands? In his exasperation he became insolent.

"The meaning, madame? The meaning is that I require payment for my necklace, that the patience of my creditors is exhausted, and that unless you order the money to be paid, I am a ruined man!"

Marie Antoinette considered him in cold, imperious anger.

"Are you daring to suggest that your necklace is in my possession?"

Böhmer was white to the lips, his hands worked nervously.

"Does Your Majesty deny it?"

"You are insolent!" she exclaimed. "You will be good enough to answer questions, not to ask them. Answer me, then. Do you suggest that I have your necklace?"

But a desperate man is not easily intimidated.

"No, madame; I affirm it! It was the Countess of Valois who——"

"Who is the Countess of Valois?"

That sudden question, sharply uttered, was a sword of doubt through the heart of Böhmer's confidence. He stared wide-eyed a moment at the indignant lady before him, then collected himself, and made as plain a tale as he could of the circumstances under which he had parted with the necklace—Madame de la Motte's intervention, the mediation of the Cardinal de Rohan with Her Majesty's signed approval of the terms, and the delivery of the necklace to His Eminence for transmission to the Queen.

Marie Antoinette listened in increasing horror and anger. A flush crept into her pale cheeks.

"You will prepare and send me a written statement of what you have just told me," she said. "You have leave to go."

That interview took place on August 9th. The 15th was the Feast of the Assumption, and also the name-day of the Queen, therefore a gala day at Court, bringing a concourse of nobility to Versailles. Mass was to be celebrated in the royal chapel at ten o'clock, and the celebrant, as by custom established for the occasion, was the Grand Almoner of France, the Cardinal de Rohan.

But at ten o'clock a meeting was being held in the King's cabinet, composed of the King and Queen, the Baron de Breteuil, and the Keeper of the Seals, Miromesnil. They were met, as they believed, to decide upon a course of action in the matter of a diamond necklace. In reality, these puppets in the hands of destiny were helping to decide the fate of the French monarchy.

The King, fat, heavy, and phlegmatic, sat in a gilded chair by an ormolu-encrusted writing-table. His bovine eyes were troubled. Two wrinkles of vexation puckered the flesh above his great nose. Beside, and slightly behind him, stood the Queen, white and imperious, whilst facing them stood Monsieur de Breteuil, reading aloud the statement which Böhmer had drawn up.

When he had done, there was a moment's utter silence. Then the King spoke, his voice almost plaintive.

"What is to be done, then? But what is to be done?"

It was the Queen who answered him, harshly and angrily.

"When the Roman purple and a princely title are but masks to cover a swindler, there is only one thing to be done. This swindler must be exposed and punished."

"But," the King faltered, "we have not heard the Cardinal."

"Can you think that Böhmer, that any man, would dare to lie upon such a matter?"

"But consider, madame, the Cardinal's rank and family," calmly interposed the prudent Miromesnil; "consider the stir, the scandal that must ensue if this matter is made public."

But the obedient daughter of Marie Thérèse, hating Rohan at her mother's bidding and for her mother's sake, was impatient of any such wise considerations.

"What shall the scandal signify to us?" she demanded. The King looked at Breteuil.

"And you, Baron? What is your view?"

Breteuil, Rohan's mortal enemy, raised his shoulders and flipped the document.

"In the face of this, Sire, it seems to me that the only course is to arrest the Cardinal."

"You believe, then—" began the King, and checked, leaving the sentence unfinished.

But Breteuil had understood.

"I know that the Cardinal must be pressed for money," he said. "Ever prodigal in his expenditure, he is further saddled with the debts of the Prince de Guimenée."

"And you can believe," the King cried, "that a Prince of the House of

Rohan, however pressed for money, could—Oh, it is unimaginable!"

"Yet has he not stolen my name?" the Queen cut in. "Is he not proven a common, stupid forger?"

"We have not heard him," the King reminded her gently.

"And His Eminence might be able to explain," ventured Miromesnil. "It were certainly prudent to give him the opportunity."

Slowly the King nodded his great, powdered head.

"Go and find him. Bring him at once!" he bade Breteuil; and Breteuil bowed and departed.

Very soon he returned, and he held the door whilst the handsome Cardinal, little dreaming what lay before him, serene and calm, a commanding figure in his cassock of scarlet watered silk, rustled forward into the royal presence, and so came face to face with the Queen for the first time since that romantic night a year ago in the Grove of Venus.

Abruptly the King launched his thunderbolt.

"Cousin," he asked, "what purchase is this of a diamond necklace that you are said to have made in the Queen's name?"

King and Cardinal looked into each other's eyes, the King's narrowing, the Cardinal's dilating, the King leaning forward in his chair, elbows on the table, the Cardinal standing tense and suddenly rigid.

Slowly the colour ebbed from Rohan's face, leaving it deathly pale. His eyes sought the Queen, and found her contemptuous glance, her curling lip. Then at last his handsome head sank a little forward.

"Sire," he said unsteadily, "I see that I have been duped. But I have duped nobody."

"You have no reason to be troubled, then. You need but to explain."

Explain! That was precisely what he could not do. Besides, what was the nature of the explanation demanded of him? Whilst he stood stricken there, it was the Queen who solved this question.

"If, indeed, you have been duped," she said scornfully, her colour high, her eyes like points of steel, "you have been self-duped. But even then it is beyond belief that self-deception could have urged you to the lengths of passing yourself off as my intermediary—you, who should know yourself to be the last man in France I should employ, you to whom I have not spoken once in eight years." Tears of anger glistened in her eyes; her voice shrilled up. "And yet, since you have not denied it, since you put forward this pitiful plea that you have been duped, we must believe the unbelievable."

Thus at a blow she shattered the fond hopes he had been cherishing ever since the night of gems—of gems, forsooth! —in the Grove of Venus; thus she laid his ambition in ruins about him, and left the man himself half-stunned.

Observing his disorder, the ponderous but kindly monarch rose.

"Come, my cousin," he said more gently, "collect yourself. Sit down here and write what you may have to say in answer."

And with that he passed into the library beyond, accompanied by the Queen and the two Ministers.

Alone, Rohan staggered forward and

sank nervelessly into the chair. He took up a pen, pondered a moment, and began to write. But he did not yet see clear. He could not yet grasp the extent to which he had been deceived, could not yet believe that those treasured notes from Marie Antoinette were forgeries, that it was not the Queen who had met him in the Grove of Venus and given him the rose whose faded petals kept those letters company in a portfolio of red morocco. But at least it was clear to him that, for the sake of honour—the Queens' honour—he must assume it so; and in that assumption he now penned his statement.

When it was completed, himself he bore it to the King in the library.

Louis read it with frowning brows; then passed it to the Queen.

"Have you the necklace now?" he asked Rohan.

"Sire, I left it in the hands of this woman Valois."

"Where is this woman?"

"I do not know, Sire."

"And the letter of authority bearing the Queens signature, which the jewellers say you presented to them—where is that?"

"I have it, Sir. I will place it before you. It is only now that I realize that it is a forgery."

"Only now!" exclaimed the Queen in scorn.

"Her Majesty's name has been compromised," said the King sternly. "It must be cleared. As King and as husband my duty is clear. Your Eminence must submit to arrest."

Rohan fell back a step in stupefaction. For disgrace and dismissal he was prepared, but not for this.

"Arrest?" he whispered. "Ah, wait, Sire. The publicity! The scandal! Think of that! As for the necklace, I will pay for it myself, and so pay for my credulous folly. I beseech you, Sire, to let the matter end here. I implore it for my own sake, for the sake of the Prince de Soubise and the name of Rohan, which would be smirched unjustly and to no good purpose."

He spoke with warmth and force; and, without adding more, yet conveyed an impression that much more could be said for the course he urged.

The King hesitated, considering. Noting this, the prudent, far-seeing Miromesnil ventured to develop the arguments at which Rohan had hinted, laying stress upon the desirability of avoiding scandal.

Louis was nodding, convinced, when Marie Antoinette, unable longer to contain her rancour, broke into opposition of those prudent measures.

"This hideous affair must be disclosed," she insisted. "It is due to me that it should publicly be set right. The Cardinal shall tell the world how he came to suppose that, not having spoken to him for eight years, I could have wished to make use of his services in the purchase of this necklace."

She was in tears, and her weak, easily swayed husband accounted her justified in her demand. And so, to the great consternation of all the world, Prince Louis de Rohan was arrested like a common thief.

A foolish, indiscreet, short-sighted woman had allowed her rancour to override all other considerations—careless of consequences, careless of injustice, so that her resentment, glutted by her

hatred of the Cardinal, should be gratified. The ungenerous act was terribly to recoil upon her. In tears and blood was she to expiate her lack of charity; very soon she was to reap its bitter fruits.

Saint-Just, a very prominent counsellor of the Parliament, one of the most advanced apostles of the new ideas that were to find full fruition in the Revolution, expressed the popular feeling in the matter.

"Great and joyful affair! A cardinal and a queen implicated in a forgery and a swindle! Filth on the crosier and the sceptre! What a triumph for the ideas of liberty!"

At the trial that followed before Parliament, Madame de la Motte, a man named Réteaux de Villette—who had forged the Queen's hand and impersonated Desclaux—and a Mademoiselle d'Oliva—who had used her striking resemblance to Marie Antoinette to impersonate the Queen in the Grove of Venus—were found guilty and sentenced. But the necklace was not recovered. It had been broken up, and some of the diamonds were already sold; others were being sold in London by Captain de la Motte, who had gone thither for the purpose, and who prudently remained there.

The Cardinal was acquitted, amid intense public joy and acclamation, which must have been gall and wormwood to the Queen. His powerful family, the clergy of France, and the very people, with whom he had ever been popular, had all laboured strenuously to vindicate him. And thus it befell that the one man the Queen had aimed at crushing was the only person connected with the affair who came out of it unhurt. The Queen's animus against the Cardinal aroused against her the animus of his friends of all classes. Appalling libels of her were circulated throughout Europe. It was thought and argued that she was more deeply implicated in the swindle than had transpired, that Madame de la Motte was a scapegoat, that the Queen should have stood her trial with the others, and that she was saved only by the royalty that hedged her.

Conceive what a weapon this placed in the hands of the men of the new ideas of liberty—men who were bent on proving the corruption of a system they sought to destroy!

Marie Antoinette should have foreseen something of this. She might have done so had not her hatred blinded her, had she been less intent upon seizing the opportunity at all costs to make Rohan pay for his barbed wittcism upon her mother. She might have been spared much had she but spared Rohan when the chance was hers. As it was, the malevolent echoes of the affair and of Saint-Just's exultation were never out of her ears. They followed her to her trial eight years later before the revolutionary tribunal. They followed her to the very scaffold, of which they had undoubtedly supplied a plank.

The Talking Bird

"THEM green birds costs like hell." When Todge Farkas had emitted these six words, he rose from his haunches, took deliberate aim at a knot hole on the side of his shanty boat, spattered the bull's-eye with a jet of tobacco juice and squatted down again. The lantern-jawed fisherman to whom he spoke, a fellow named Rance Jelks, also squatted beside Darkwater River, and said nothing whatever, but continued to whittle on a peg while considering Todge's remark. Then Rance in turn stood up, and with the peg that he had whittled, pinned his single gallus to a pair of sagging pants. During the solicitous procedure, he ruminated and pondered over what Todge had said, before indicating his full comprehension by a grunt, "Yep." Then Rance squatted again beside his accomplice.

Thus did six words and a monosyllable give the lie to a certain French savant who announced that "speech is employed to conceal thought." Of course, old Frenchy merely applied his maxim to city folks, for woodsmen never wag their tongues all day and say nothing. Rance Jelks hadn't paddled up here with Dora, nine hot miles to Todge's shanty boat, for the purpose of saying nothing. Rance didn't like to paddle and Rance didn't like to talk. He had business with Todge Farkas—important business that would make them rich before morning. For an hour they had planned together on the muddy banks of Darkwater, talking little and meditating much, while two sympathetic minds flowed in the same channel.

Speech is not a cloak to conceal thought. A word, a wink, a nod may open wide the door to unbounded vistas. So when Todge observed that green birds cost like hell, he laid their whole scheme before Rance Jelks. Green birds are expensive, particularly if they have red wings and can talk. Such a bird hung in his hoop against a tree near the front of Jason Badreau's cabin, dangling upside down by his claws, and chattering all day long. Jason must have paid as much as four or five dollars for him. Consequently Jason had money. No fool would spend five bucks on a bird that wasn't even fit to eat unless he had dollars to throw at mud turtles.

Furthermore, folks whispered that Jason had been a pirate. Didn't he walk with a sailorman's swagger and have holes in his ears where he used to wear rings? And it's a dead give-away when a fellow has double fishhooks tattooed on his arm. Besides, wasn't Jason forever jabbering some kind of foreign lingo to that bird? Of course he'd been a pirate. That's where he got his kegs of gold, and came up here to hide, same as plenty more folks were dodging about in these Darkwater

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swamps. Whatever cash Jason once had, he now had. For the tightwad never turned loose a nickel, except that day when he bought some ribbons for his girl at Raker's Store and paid Jim Raker a five-dollar gold piece. It wouldn't take more than a snuff can full of little gold shiners to put two fishermen on Easy Street—and Jason had a barrel of them. Today neither Todge nor Rance possessed a cent; tomorrow they'd be lousy with coin.

This logical train of thought followed Todge's six-word locomotive that talking birds cost like hell.

Six syllables may suggest six million facts. Frenchy was wrong.

During a drought the river banks are high and the stream is low, stagnant, greenish, its surface mottled with pollen and a vegetation that resembles slime. The shantyboat man and fisherman held their conference at the shore end of a plank whose other end reached the gunwale of Todge's drab and dingy craft. On top of the sloping bank behind them two women crouched beside a pot of simmering tar, in which Todge's horse-faced wife occasionally dipped his seine. The sallower and scrawnier woman, named Dora, had arrived an hour ago with Rance. These flat-chested slatterns chewed their snuff sticks and talked even more economically than the husbands. Yet the four of them came to an accurate agreement.

While the men digested their conversation, Todge's wife got up from the tar pot and went slouching down the hill, crossing to her boat by a plank that slapped the water as she strode. She was going inside for a coffeepot, and paused as Todge observed to Rance, "I reckin 'tain't our play to kill him?"

The rawboned woman halted. Her gingham dress hung straight down, like that on a wooden figure out of Noah's ark, as she stopped, shifted the snuff stick in her mouth and sneered:

"Kill him? You'd have to kill his gal too. Then how'll we ever find his money?"

Having delivered herself of this finality, Hun—an abbreviation for Honey—went stooping through the doorway of her boat.

That squelched their argument. Neither man hazarded another word until Hun marched back along the plank, her left jaw showing its scarlet birthmark from ear to chin. As she passed, the husband said, "Hun's right. T'other way's best."

The men had risen. Rance yawned. "Everything's about settled?"

"Reckon so," Todge agreed. "We'll git to Jason's about a hour by sun, then fix it so we hit Raker's Store just as the eight o'clock train rolls by. That'll give folks a chance to see me an' you with Jason, so they won't suspicion us."

This alibi sounded perfect. Rance gave his head a twitch toward the women at the pot and asked, "Does Hun know exactly what to do?"

"Sholy. Hun! Oh, Hun!"

Inquiringly, Hun turned her eyes, yellowish eyes, the color of a garfish's belly. The birthmark showed angry against a sallow skin. She held her tongue, munched her snuff stick, spat, and languidly stirred a cup of coffee with her finger.

"Hun," the husband called, "is you an' Dory laid off what to do tonight when me an' Rance is gone?"

"Yep."

"Got everything fixed?"

"Yep." And wearied by garrulousness, Hun gulped her coffee.

Nobody spoke again. The visiting couple settled flat in their dugout. Rance dipped his paddle. The slim black craft glided away, down the Darkwater.

At Jason Badreau's wharf even a blind man could see evidences of lavish wealth. Neither Rance nor Todge was blind, but kept both eyes peeled and saw everything. The wharf itself was constructed on floating logs and floored with cypress boards. Cypress costs money. It even had a special place for his girl's skiff—a skiff that was painted white, with green trimmings. Who ever heard of a poor man painting his skiff?

Rance nodded at Todge as they noted these prosperous facts, and climbed some wooden steps from the wharf to the level on which Jason's cabin stood. More luxury. No other fisherman had wooden steps. Mud banks were good enough for anybody.

Their cunning eyes took in Jason's clearing. He was the only fisherman that ever troubled himself to make a clearing, to cut away undergrowth instead of keeping drunk between hauls of his seine. His neat little cabin fronted Darkwater, thirty paces back from the edge of the bluff, and Rance hardly believed it to be the same tumble-down shack that he used to know. He well remembered the day when he first heard the boom of an ax at this place and crawled stealthily through the bushes to size up the stranger. The cabin then consisted of the debris of two rooms, long abandoned. Its roof had caved in, its chimneys fallen. Nobody would recognise it now—new roof, brick chimneys, a gallery in front, with a plank walk leading to the river. And Jason had tacked on two additional rooms at the rear. He was bound to be rich.

"Here he comes! Here he comes!" the green bird screamed at them, tumbling around in his hoop like a circus performer and squawking a lot of words that they couldn't understand. The swampers shuffled past him toward the house, with heads half turned, suspicious of the parrot's foreign jabber.

"Look!" Rance nudged his partner. "In that right-hand room!"

Two doors on the gallery stood open. The left room was Jason's kitchen. Through the right-hand door Todge saw what Rance had already glimpsed, and Todge's eyes bulged—a gold bed, gold, with thick white pillows and a tasseled quilt. That must be Estrella's room. And both men wondered anew whether she were actually Jason's daughter, or just his woman, as many folks contended. It did seem unlikely for a man to waste so much money on a daughter.

That incredible gold bed kept both the swampers squinting sideways, until Jason showed himself in the kitchen door, a heavier built man than either Rance or Todge, with kinky black hair and a jolly way about him.

"Hello, boys," he called, and sat down with them on the steps to discuss their job for the night.

Swamp lakes along the Mississippi are literally wriggling with fish, especially those that lie on the river side of the levees. Rising waters each year fill these depressions with trout, cats, perch, buffalo; and a falling river leaves them crowded together. Buffalo fish weighing twenty, forty, sixty pounds find a

ready market on the lake bank at four cents.

Some lakes are protected by law, some are watched by the owners—which didn't hinder Jason. Tonight he meant to plunder the unguarded Bucktail Lake, with Rance and Todge to help draw his seine at ten dollars each. Before morning their clandestine haul would be made, the money collected and all hands innocently at home. Jason supposed this to be their entire program, without suspecting that his helpers had arranged a sinister variation.

"Better be moving." Todge shot a glance of hate at the parrot and rose to go. The devilish bird kept scrambling around in his hoop, jabbering that foreign lingo to Jason. It made Todge nervous. Those glittering beady eyes might see plumb through him and tell Jason. Then their night's job would fail. "Better start," Todge insisted, but Jason tarried with a smile as Estrella came out from her kitchen.

Unlike Hun or Dory, who were descended from English-speaking squatters, this girl drew her coal-black hair, her animation and vivid coloring from Latin maids who trod out grapes and listened to the guitars of dark-eyed lovers. There was no flat chest, no slouchiness about Jason's daughter as she danced toward them, snapping her fingers like castanets with all the grace of the tarantella. Grimly, Todge compared her with his angular birthmarked wife.

"Never mind," he promised himself; "tomorrow she won't act so sassy."

The most credulous swamper would never have believed Todge Farkas on oath if Todge had told what he actually saw Estrella do.

Airily the girl came tripping along the gallery, caught up a cup of water from the wash shelf and went dancing down into the yard. That's where Todge witnessed her unaccountable behavior. She poured water on a white-handled contraption and began jabbing it into her mouth, back and forth, working like a bootblack; and she spit out soapsuds that smelled sweet. Todge saw this, saw it himself, with his own diluted blue eyes.

The green bird was having a conniption fit, dangling by one claw and squalling at Estrella.

"Yes, you greedy old Pedro," she laughed, "I'll feed you." And she went to stand underneath him with a sunflower seed between her lips, letting the bird peck it out. Todge wouldn't have trusted his jaw within forty feet of Pedro's wicked bill.

Jason glanced at the sun, took off his nice low-quarter shoes and put on the pair that he used for wading.

"All set, boys?" he asked.

"Yep."

Not a sign of gratification passed between the swampers as Jason made ready to leave, wearing no coat and carrying no weapon except his fisher's knife. The knife, however, wouldn't save his money if matters turned out as they intended.

"Well, daughter"—Jason bade her good-by—"I'll get home about daylight. Anything you want done?"

"Can't think of a thing."

The girl betrayed no timidity at being left alone, but waved farewell from the steps as the three men moved off

together, and stood smiling to hear her father sing his same old song:

"Ye-ho, lads, we go across the sea——"

Three heads disappeared downward behind the brink of the bluff; then Estrella heard their paddles dipping.

Next morning, when the coroner and wrathful citizens investigated that night's affair, the posse had not caught either Todge or Rance, though it was easy to trace every step that they took with Jason. First they had paddled their dugouts some four miles up Darkwater, and at 8:17 were drinking soda pop in Jim Raker's Store. Jim and his clerk swore to the exact time, because they remembered that the train had passed while all three men were there.

From the store the trio went north, left their dugouts and crossed on foot to a sand bar at the Mississippi River. There the Ida C, a gasoline boat which belonged to the Vicksburg fish merchant, was waiting with ice and barrels to take them aboard. On the Ida C they voyaged fourteen miles up the Mississippi to a point opposite Bucktail Lake, arriving about 10:30. From eleven o'clock until 1:30 Rance and Todge were helping to drag the seine, and remained continuously with Jason. By three A. M. their catch of fish was loaded on the boat and they were hurrying homeward. Almost exactly at four o'clock, Jason, Rance and Todge stepped ashore together at the point where the Ida C had picked them up. From this indisputable testimony it seemed impossible that either Rance or Todge could have been at Jason's cabin between sundown and 4:30 A.M. What occurred meanwhile with Estrella had to be gathered from the statements of survivors, and from the position of the bodies, which lay where they fell.

After Jason had gone, Estrella did not at first feel lonely, certainly not afraid. The girl loved these woods and streams, finding a companionship in the vast silences that surrounded her. Every bearded cypress that fringed the river, every tangle of swamp vines along the shore to her were homes of friendly birds and squirrels. And when dusk came slinking among these glades, when a twilight haze overhung the river, they seemed more mystically glamorous under their veil.

The green bird chattered, clamoring for notice. She dallied with Pedro a while, then strolled down to sit upon the wharf and watch the river shadows deepen. This was the dreamy hour that she loved.

Darkwater had turned to leaden gray when Estrella rose, climbed the steps and took Pedro on her finger—"Come, old fellow; bedtime."

There's something uncanny about a dark and empty house, a habitation in which men have lived and died, and from which deserted shell the human presence has been withdrawn. Estrella didn't think of that, but went slowly into her kitchen and set the sleepy Pedro on a chair until she could light a lamp. Her lamp was a plain glass globe, with unshaded chimney.

"Now, Pedro, go to sleep."

The bird muttered drowsily as his mistress placed him on his perch for the night, blinked a time or two, ruffled his feathers and dozed off.

The remains of supper still lay on

the oilcloth-covered table. Estrella did not clear it away, but settled idly into Jason's rocking-chair and drew the lamp toward her. Maybe she would read a little, or maybe sit with hands folded in her lap. It was good to be alone and think. Presently she thought of locking her bedroom door, which now stood open. Not because she dreaded a prowler—anyway, she'd go and lock it. By a connecting door she passed from one room to the other.

It was no hysterical habit of Estrella Badreau's to fancy that she heard things at night; yet she halted at the door of her own dark room and listened. A trifle that she should stop to listen, a trifle that grows bigger as panic magnifies it. Yes, she did hear something, and quickly locked her door. Tried to bolt it. The bolt caught. With shaky fingers she jammed it into the socket and hurried back to the kitchen. There she stood listening.

The wooden steps leading up from the wharf began to creak; one of them, the middle one, had an individual squeak of its own. She could not be mistaken. Hastily Estrella closed the kitchen door, all except a crack, and peered through. A shapeless bulk lifted itself clumsily above the crest of the bluff, an amorphous object, unlike any creature that roamed the woods by day or night. Yet she could see the thing, outlined against the dimmer darkness of the river.

For one moment the singular shape stood still, then came a voice calling, "Hello! Hello, Jason!"

It was the peddler. The peddler—that's all Estrella knew about him. Nobody knew more; people called him by no special name, only Ped. This itinerant trader had twice spent the night at their house, and she recognized his voice. So few strangers came that way that none were forgotten.

"Hello!" Ped shouted again. It was dangerous to approach any house on Darkwater without calling and being answered. "Hello! Oh, Jason! Jason!"

Althought it seemed queer, Estrella felt a chill of fright, an intangible premonition that evil would be linked with that voice. Her impulse was to order him off by saying that her father had gone away for the night and Ped couldn't stay. Every finger itched to slam the door and lock it. No; that would be telling the peddler that she was unprotected.

"I'm a fool, a fool!" By one resolute effort Estrella stepped out on the gallery and said, "Come in, Ped; come in."

To the man there seemed no delay about her answer. It came promptly. He had barely paused, and now stumbled on again. Estrella met him at the steps, a laden beast of burden, bending under the weight of his merchandise, who backed against the gallery, eased down his bundle and loosed the straps from his shoulders.

"How's business, Ped?" she asked, striving to appear natural.

"Rotten." Ped gave his thumb a disgusted jerk toward the north. "Up yonder way the corn's all burnt out, and cotton ain't doin' much better. People got no money."

"That's bad," Estrella sympathized.

"Yes," he nodded; "I'm working down to the sugar country."

Without stepping up on the gallery, Ped went to the wash shelf, reached a tin cup from its nail and drank—drank

twice. Observing him warily, Estrella couldn't be sure whether he were an American or a foreigner; certainly no Syrian or Greek, though dark as a mulatto from sunburn. He appeared undersized and wiry, yet the peddler's neck was thick from the constant carrying of a pack.

After drinking copiously, Ped turned with his face in the light. Nobody expects a peddler to look frank and innocent like a baby. They have a more or less fugitive, sneaky and secretive air from dodging through bushes, evading landlords and selling worthless gewgaws to negroes on the sly. Town merchants abuse them for stealing their trade. Planters chase them off the property because they traffic with tenants who should buy at the plantation store. A precarious calling; where he makes money or carries valuable goods, Ped runs a perpetual risk of being shot from ambush. And if he kills in his own defense, he kills a man who has friends, while the vagrant is always friendless. For every robbery along his route, for every citizen that may be held up, this rover catches the blame. And it all shows in his face.

Perhaps Estrella weighed these extenuations; maybe she only felt a woman's warning that something terrible would be connected with his coming. Yet she had mastered herself and was ready with an answer when Ped glanced around to inquire, "Where's Jason?"

"Oh, father?" Estrella replied, also glancing around as though she had but this moment noticed Jason's absence. "Wasn't father at the wharf when you landed?"

"No, I didn't see him."

"Oh, well, he'll be back in a minute" —a lie by which she confessed her fear.

"I want to stay all night," the peddler said.

"Very good. You can sleep in the shed room."

Having forseen that he would ask a lodging, Estrella considered it safer to agree without hesitation; so Ped took up his bundle and she suggested, "Wait until father comes. He'll help you carry it inside."

"Never mind."

Ped already had the bulky package in his arms, and Estrella held the lamp while he passed through her kitchen to the small shed room at the rear. This tiny pen had not been part of the original cabin—just tacked on later as a storage space for Jason's nets in winter. On one side was a homemade bunk, a shuck mattress, where an occasional helper slept. Ped knew the room. Twice before he had occupied it. So he dropped his bale and returned to the kitchen.

"Hungry?" Estrella inquired, standing beside the table with uplifted lamp.

"Hungry as a wolf." He had sharp white teeth—like a wolf's.

"Sit down. I'll fix your supper."

The peddler sank wearily into a chair and looked on with dull eyes while Estrella raked some chunks together on the hearth and set her spider-legged oven where it must soon get warm beside the coffee pot. Into the skillet she flung several slices of bacon, and the famished man sniffed at their appetizing odors. When all was ready his hostess laid before him a clean plate, with corn bread, molasses, sizzling bacon and a cup of coffee.

"Ugh!" Ped grunted. "That smells

good." And he fell upon it and devoured it.

Neither of them talked, from which reticent habit of the swamp no inferences could be drawn. Silently Estrella sat watching the man, then raised her head and listened. Ped heard no sound. Neither had Estrella, yet she darted to the doorway and gazed out.

"Thought I heard father," she explained, keeping up the pretense.

Ped ate slowly, as though his jaws were tired, yet he ate completely, to the very last crumb, pushed back his chair and twisted round to the fire without a word. His eyes gradually closed, and Estrella might have believed he'd dropped off to sleep, but her tense faculties imagined him measuring her through his lashes.

"Shucks"—she tossed her head impatiently—"I won't be such a fool!"

Without being aware of it, Estrella had spoken aloud and roused the peddler, who glanced up, smiling apologetically.

"Scuse me, Miss Strella. I'm wore out."

"Better turn in then."

"Thank y', ma'am."

Ped did not wait to be urged, but leaned forward in his chair and commenced unlacing a pair of strong thick-soled shoes, with grayish tops that reached midway the calf of Ped's legs. Estrella noticed the shoes. Her sensitized mind saw every detail.

Having got their strings undone and shoes ready to slip off, Ped nodded good night and went tramping into the rear room. The door between he left ajar for light. Estrella also noticed that. She heard his bunk creak as Ped sat heavily upon it; then a thump on the floor and a second thump when he kicked off one shoe after another. The shuck mattress rustled. Now Ped must be stretching out. For a time she heard nothing.

Nor did Estrella break the kitchen's quiet. She kept utterly still, while through the outer door came the hoot of owls, the croak of frogs, all the familiar noises of the night. Although sitting with her head half turned away, Estrella's nimble imagination visualised the door through which Ped had vanished. The log wall between them was not thoroughly chinked; mud had fallen out in sections, and one could see into the kitchen. Ped might easily lie in his bunk and spy upon her through a crack.

This sensation made the girl so uncomfortable that she rose with an overdisplay of nonchalance and bolted the door. The window? That window had originally opened to the outer air, befor Jason built his shed room. Now it opened into that room; not a glazed window, but a mere loophole through the logs, about two feet square, and closed by a wooden shutter on hinges. This shutter she could not make secure. Its flimsy fastening was no more than a cord hooked over a nail. However, the window was breast high. A man must scramble through head first, and her shotgun would stop him. For a well-balanced young person, Estrella had got pretty badly upset.

Apparently the peddler went straight to sleep. Through the chinks she heard his laborious breathing and jeered at herself for having borrowed a bunch of worriment. All she need do was to bolt the outer door, take the shotgun and barricade herself in her own room. From behind these massive logs, noth-

ng short of artillery could dislodge her.

After banking the fire and stacking way her dishes in a pan, Estrella turned lowly to the outer door, which yet tood half open. Not an unaccustomed ound did she hear nothing to alarm ier, until she gave the door a gentle ush—and failed to budge it. Something r somebody seemed to be holding it rom the outside. In sudden fright Estrella threw her weight against the knob, hen gasped, for a boot thrust itself vithin the room and a long leg in cotonade breeches effectually prevented er from shutting the door. At the first wift flash of thought she suspected that his might be Ped, who'd sneaked round through the yard. No, Ped wore aced shoes, and these were boots — eather-topped boots.

A characteristic change swept over Estrella. When no tangible danger hreatened, she had felt uneasy; now, vhen a marauder was actually trying to reak in, she was not conscious of fear. n fact she had scant time to consider vhat she felt, for in spite of her efforts he door burst open and two masked igures grappled her. The taller one, vearing a bandanna mask, promptly lapped a rough hand over her mouth. This booted and red-masked intruder ripped her wrists, while the smaller one orced a gag between Estrella's teeth nd knotted it behind her neck. Then hey bound her tight.

The thing was done. Neither of her ssailants had uttered a syllable until hey got Estrella gagged and bound. Red Mask locked the door by which hey'd entered, then clutched her arms nd whispered, "Show us the money!"

Their coup had been thoroughly planed, and Estrella stood helpless. Only her eyes were free, snapping back and forth from one to the other. The taller of the two, the booted one, wore a railroad cap of greasy cloth with patent-leather brim; while the slighter desperado wore an army hat and brown jean breeches. From excessive caution they had muffled their entire heads, which wholly disguised them both. Whoever these persons might be, they had come for business.

"Show us Jason's money!" Red Mask repeated.

Being gagged, their victim could not speak; could only shake her head to indicate either that Jason kept no money in the house or that she refused to give it up.

"Won't tell, huh?" Red Mask threw her into the rocking-chair, where Army Hat tied her arms and legs. The ropes cut hard; she winced and struggled. It was no use.

From their orderly and systematic procedure it seemed evident that stubbornness was an obstacle which the outlaws were prepared to overcome. Without a word, Army Hat drew a long knife, at sight of which Estrella made signs toward a cigar box on the mantelshelf. This, the Army Hat pounced upon and opened. It contained nothing except two pipes, some matches and a can of tobacco—Jason's smoking outfit.

"No money here," Army Hat was about to throw down the box when Estrella signed for him to lift its tray. There lay Jason's cash—one dollar and eighty cents in silver. They must have been cheap thieves to pocket that, and Red Mask demanded, "Where's the *gold?* If we untie your legs, will you show us the gold money?"

Frantically Estrella shook her head,

trying to convince her captors that Jason had no more cash in the house. Again Army Hat drew the knife, and to conquer a pretty woman, used their most ingeniously effective weapon.

"Spile her beauty," suggested Red Mask, who acted as leader, and arranged to hold Estrella, while Army Hat applied persuasion. Now Red Mask glanced toward the hearth and said, "Try a chunk o' fire."

A sweat of terror dabbled Estrella's forehead as she watched the crouching bandit stir amongst the embers and select a half-burned stick.

"Scorch her left eye first," Red Mask chuckled. "Ef she don't talk, burn t'other one."

With torturing deliberation, Army Hat shoved the red-hot coal nearer and nearer to Estrella's face; convulsively she jerked back against the table, knocking down a glass, which fell clattering to the floor. The parrot waked and squawked.

"Damn that bird!" Both the cutthroats turned, and Red Mask said, "Don't be in sech a hurry. Nobody in ten miles o' here. Make the gal talk."

Again the coal moved closer and closer, until Estrella could feel its menacing heat, and wrenched in a frenzy at her bonds.

"Hold it!" Red Mask ordered. "She'll talk now."

Glaring at ner from beneath the army hat, Estrella shrank from those blue, malicious eyes. Even the parrot hushed. The room was most intensely still, yet all three of them were so engrossed that no one heard the wooden shutter or saw a rigid arm that stiffened through the window.

Army Hat was bending over, within a foot of Estrella's face, when a roar filled the room and a level streak of fire went darting across it, direct to Army Hat. One moment the figure rose upright, swayed, dropped the brand and pitched forward. The falling body struck Estrella's chair and she flinched away from the corpse that tumbled in a flabby heap. Red Mask stood amazed and staring at the window, then whirled, overthrew table and lamp together in a stampede to escape.

For one brief space the room went dark. Then oil gurgled from the lamp and flickered along the floor. By this treacherous light Ped saw the booted robber fumbling at the lock. Again the pistol roared; again the level streak crossed the room, just as Red Mask snatched open the door. A third shot. The booted figure threw up a hand and went blindly plunging into darkness. Outside, a crash from the broken wash shelf—a rattle of the tin basin and cup as they fell on the ground.

Inside the kitchen the oil blazed higher; the burning pool spread. The parrot screamed and screamed, fluttering from his perch. Then through the shuttered window Estrella saw the peddler diving head first in his underclothes. Like an athlete, he caught upon his hands, turned an awkward somersault, grabbed the flaming lamp and hurled it out of doors. It struck the ground and exploded, making a great flare to which the peddler gave no heed. Fire in the yard wouldn't harm Estrella, but that threatening puddle on the floor must be attended to at once.

Ped rushed into the girl's room, rushed back and smothered it with a blanket. Not until then did the barefoot and swift moving man turn to Estrella, who

was wrenching at her ropes. With a slash of his knife the peddler cut them. She sprang up, stumbling over the corpse, while Ped leaped to the kitchen door and slammed it. Now, by the flicker of sparks from the fireplace, she could see his vague white figure groping its way toward her. Suddenly he stopped with a sharp exclamation of pain and held up one foot.

"Ped, are you hurt?"

"Hot coals—this fellow dropped 'em."

"Stand still," she warned him. "You'll cut your feet on the glass. Lemme get another light."

"Don't — that man outside — he'll shoot! Draw the curtains!"

When Estrella had shrouded both windows, Ped knelt down and struck a match. Its glimmer showed the upset table and a huddled figure lying beside it, face downward.

"Dead as a herring! Better leave him be for the sheriff."

Then, as if the thought had just come to him, the peddler inquired, "Jason—hasn't got home yet?"

"No," Estrella answered guiltily; "he won't be here till morning. He's seining Bucktail Lake with Rance and Todge."

"Todge Farkas?" Another thought occurred to Ped. "That fellow who got away—he might be Todge. I saw Todge once wearing a red handkerchief like that."

"Couldn't be Todge," Estrella contradicted. "He and Rance are both with father."

"But——"

The peddler started to suggest something, and hushed—that Todge might have given Jason the slip and come back to rob his house. Ped kept pondering, and when he spoke again it was not of Todge's bandanna.

"Miss Strella," he said slowly, "you said your father would come home any minute—was you skeered o' me?"

"Yes."

There was the truth between them in that black room, across the stiffening body of the dead; and after a peculiar silence, the peddler said, "Miss Strella, we're bound to stay here together. I can't leave you to go for help."

"No, no! You mustn't leave me."

"Then go into your room—take the shotgun—lock your door. I'll set here. Maybe I'd better put on some clothes." And Ped smiled faintly.

In her own dark room Estrella kept vigil until dawn, yet she did not lock the door between them, or even close it. Twice during the night she called out gently, "Ped!" And his answer came, "Yes." She knew that Ped was sitting there, and knew what lay on the floor beside him. Slowly the heavens lighted. The longest night cannot last forever. At dawn, without warning, the green bird gabbled, "Here he comes! Here he comes!"

The wharf steps creaked; Estrella sprang to her feet as Jason's song rang out:

"And every day, when I'm away, she prays for me——"

"Oh, father! Father!"

Muddy to his waist from drawing a seine, with water sloshing in his shoes, Jason came along the plank walk a little in advance of Todge, with Rance Jelks lagging behind. The swampers eyed Estrella with intense anxiety. Just as

they had expected, she came flying out, screaming and excited. Rance Jelks halted. Todge, the bolder, marched on with Jason. As she ran, with eyes only for her father, Estrella did not see a booted body that sprawled in the yard to her left—Red Mask, face upward, dead.

Behind Estrella, in the kitchen doorway, stood the peddler, stupid and soggy from loss of sleep, and clutching his pistol. During that interminable night his gripping fingers had become a part of that weapon, had grown undivorcibly to its handle. Now he did not realize that he held it.

Estrella dashed out, down the front steps, passing within ten feet of the corpse, but looking only at Jason.

"Oh, father!" she called. "Two men came here—last night—to rob us."

"Rob you?" Todge Farkas expressed his violent indignation before the startled Jason spoke.

"Yes, yes!" Estrella's voice rose shrilly, "They broke in! Ped shot one!"

"Shot one?" Rance yelled from his safe position at the rear. "Did he kill her?"

Nobody heard Rance Jelks, who dropped backward and disappeared over the bluff; for Jason now caught sight of the other figure lying on the ground.

"What's this?" he asked, and stooped.

Estrella glanced downward, surprised and for the moment dumb. Red Mask lay almost within reach of her foot.

"One's dead in there!" the overwrought girl shrieked out. "We thought this one had got away."

In lone cabins along Darkwater this detail of that night's gruesome occurrence is still whispered, to prove the callous composure of Todge Farkas. He and Jason were standing almost shoulder to shoulder when they saw the booted corpse lying on its back, arms and legs outspread. Todge must have instantly recognised those blue cottonade breeches, the cap and handkerchief.

Yet he gave no sign when Jason asked, "Estrella, do you know who this man is?"

"No."

"I'll see."

There was no reason for Todge Farkas to take a second look, nor to wait and see what face would be uncovered when Jason lifted the mask. So, as Jason bent over, Todge stepped backward, noiseless as a cat, dodged around the house and ran for the woods. Jason did not see him; he was peering down at the corpse. Estrella did not see him; she was watching her father as he stooped to pull away the handkerchief. Beneath the mask, at first it seemed that the outlaw's cheek was smeared with blood. Then Jason drew the bandanna a little more aside and leaped up with a cry of horror.

"My God, Estrella! It's a woman!"

"Woman? A woman?"

Staring upward with glassy eyes, they recognised the scarlet birthmark and horsefaced countenance of Todge's wife.

Like a flash, Jason comprehended their whole scheme, and whirled with fingers tingling to throttle Todge.

But Todge Farkas was gone. So was Rance—both gone.

After making sure that his late companions had fled, Jason went bounding along the gallery, brushed past the peddler in the kitchen doorway, ran inside and darted out again.

"Estrella," he shouted, "this one is Rance's wife. Mighty smart play o'

theirs, to keep with me all night, and not be suspected, while their wives did this job. Ped! Oh, Ped!"

The peddler made no reply. Jason bent down and shook him. He was sitting on the floor, head against the door facing. On the perch above him, the green bird kept screaming. Ped had gone to sleep.

Angelo

CHAPTER I

JAMES TIERNEY pressed a pearl button on his desk in the handsome Wall Street suite of James Tierney, Inc. and supplemented the electric summons with a series of shouts for his first lieutenant, Mickey Reilley.

Reilley bounced into his chief's office with a shameful apology for a salute.

"Reilley," began the head of the famous private detective agency, with the expression of a martyr on his clean shaven, homely countenance, "y'gotta find me a Carrie again, a real nice Carrie, one of those things with a little walking cane, a fried-egg hat, yellow shoes and all the other frills."

Reilley looked his displeasure.

"Say," he asked, "what we runnin' now, a college annex?"

Tierney held before him a letter from one of his directors and backers, a Broad Street banker who had gathered an almost criminal share of the country's wealth.

"Yow! Wow!" he grunted as he studied the epistle. "Here's Mr. James Frothingham Phillips, one of the guys what put us in business, asking to have his daughter, Ione—get that name?—shadowed."

"What she doing, shoplifting?"

"Nix; making love to the family chauffeur."

Reilley dropped into a chair and put his head in his hands.

"Say," he groaned, "if they keep shootin' this kind of business at us we'll get to be a set of nice old ladies, believe me. I t'ought we was put here to look out f'r the banking business and watch the yeggs."

Tierney looked at his aide with glassy eyes.

"We're here to do just what they tell us to do," he said. "If your conscience hurts yuh, go up to police headquarters and work with the bulls until you're cured and then come back f'r a job." He grinned sarcastically.

"There's only one swell guy in reach." Reilley said, surrendering promptly. "He's outside now smoking a perfumed cigarette and making the office smell like——"

"Trot him in."

Reilley went to the waiting room and

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returned immediately with William Winthrop, only that very morning re-christened "Boston Willie."

Willie nodded patronizingly to Tierney as he stood flickering at his gray trousers with a silver-topped cane. He was a well set-up youngster of twenty-five, with broad shoulders, bright, clear, blue eyes, silky complexion and the hint of a smile playing about his patrician lips.

A gorgeous blue scarf relieved the neutral gray of his well made morning suit. A black pearl set in carved gold for a stickpin was his only ornament. His gloves were chamois and of such freshness that it was evident that he was accustomed to having people open doors.

"How-do, Mr. Tierney," he said in a Harvard drawl that would have made an Eliot lecture course sound like a Salvation Army appeal.

"How-do," repeated Tierney.

"It's—ah rawther a pleasant—ah morning."

"It's grand," said Tierney. "I gotta job f'r yuh."

"Thanks awf'ly, y'know, and all that sort of thing."

Tierney began to feel a pounding in his head. Reilley loomed in the background, grinning fiendishly as he watched his chief suffer.

"D'yuh know a society girl named Ione Phillips?" he asked when he felt he could proceed without loss of reason.

"Ione Phillips?" repeated "Boston Willie." "I've heard the name. Ah, yes! She was at the Pawmer cotillon last New Year's eve, I believe."

"The Pawmer cotillon?" asked Tierney.

The young man nodded.

"*The* Pawmers, y'know," he explained.

"How do you spell them?"

"P-a-l-m-e-r-s."

"Oh, I gotcha, Steve," cried Tierney. "Yuh must excuse *me,* Mr. Winthrop. I don't talk Boston very well."

Reilley left the room to avoid an explosion of mirth.

"What about the—ah, young lady?" Boston Willie asked.

"She's trying to get the family chauffeur to elope," explained Tierney getting down to business. "She's the only daughter and her paw wants her to marry a duke, or anyhow, nuthin' cheaper than a count. He's got the price and if there were any kings in the discard he'd spend a few millions to pick one up."

"Jove," exclaimed Willie. "I remember them now. She's the daughter of Old Man Phillips."

"K'rect," said Tierney, "on her father's side and of Old Lady Phillips on her mother's side."

The smile about Willie's lips broke into a series of wide-spreading ripples and his eyes sparkled. "Ha!"

That one "ha" alone escaped his lips. It represented laughter. Mirth had stirred him profoundly.

When he recovered from this outburst Willie placed a gloved hand to his side as if it ached.

"My word, Mr. Tierney," he said, you are droll."

Tierney looked at him suspiciously.

He made a mental note of that word "droll." He would look it up. His stenographer had a dictionary.

"Anyhow, Mr. Winthrop," he said, "yuh gotta see that she don't elope with

the chauffeur. The gir-rl's paw writes me that he is a very handsome chauffeur, but he is a wop.

"A wop," repeated Tierney. "Some people would call him a Guinea, others might call him a Joe and I guess he calls himself an Eyetalian."

"Oh!"

"My talk is rough, Mr. Winthrop, but I'm telling you what yuh gotta do," went on Tierney, seriously now. "Don't let Ione marry the wop. Marry her yourself if it is absolutely necessary—but use that only as the last resort. You know you ain't no duke or even a count. Her old man's got all the money that Rockefeller didn't have time to pick up. Go out and hire the finest gazump that ever burned benzine. Buy all the fine clothes and little hats that you want. Blow yourself to more neckties and walking sticks. Do just as you please. If I sent Ione's paw an expense bill under a thousand a week he'd think I was loafing on the job and only a piker. Just see that she don't marry the family chauffeur."

"Why don't Mr. Phillips fire the chauffeur?" asked Willie.

"Why?" repeated Tierney. "Because just as soon as he fired him she'd run away and nothing could prevent her marrying the guy except sudden death. She'd give up home and candy and everything else and start life all over again in a hall bedroom with one gas jet and a frying pan. She'd take in washing until her husband got another job. That's the way they all do when the handsome chauffeur is fired."

CHAPTER II

"ANGELO, you forgot the book of sonnets!"

Ione Phillips, half recumbent on the springy auto cushions, was canopied by a low swinging bough of dogwood, heavy with snowy white blossoms. At her feet rippled and purled a brook which the spring freshets forced laughingly on its way to a river down in the valley. The golden gleam of the dog's-tooth violets in the sward at either hand made a rug such as even the hired connoisseurs of her multi-millionaire father could not hope to spread upon his floors.

Anemones, in their soft, fawnlike coats, peeped toward her like so many pretty nuns. Shyly they took glances at her abundant feminine vigor and beauty.

"Si, signorina mia."

Angelo hurried back to the abandoned automobile in the road and brought the sonnets.

He was twenty-three years old—the skidoo age, the fine time of youth when mundane troubles are shed as easily as the rain from a well thatched cottage. He was lithe of form, had a perfect nose and lips shaped for kissing pretty girls. His brow was arched finely and his hair was raven.

Angelo was from the Piemonte, that delectable province on the Swiss border where the cool shadow of the Alps tries to fathom lakes as soft, as sweet and as deep as the eyes of women. It was in this country, when she was on her way to Venice with her father, that they met for the first time. Mr. Phillips wanted a chauffeur who spoke Italian, French and English and Angelo fled his studies

Angelo, the chauffeur, is a skilled aviator and that he has a two passenger biplane in a big barn over in Bergen county, New Jersey. Miss Phillips is enthusiastic about flying. They may use the biplane for the elopement.

I ran down to Hempstead, Long Island, yesterday, and bought the best monoplane to be found in the hangars. It was a bargain, only $3,800. It has high speed and a big fuel tank. It is warranted to fly 260 miles. I have had it shipped over to Jersey and placed in a barn less than a quarter of a mile from Angelo's machine. Very sincerely.

WILLIAM WINTHROP.

P. S.—The Italian cruiser *Il Vincitore* is due in harbor the first of next week. She is to take on several aviators and American machines for us in the Turkish war. Angelo is very patriotic and he may take a job killing Turks from the air. The cruiser has a deck for launching and receiving air machines.

Tierney read the postscript a second time. "I got his number," he said slowly. "I got it right in my back pocket. He is going to buy a warship and charge it to Tierney."

He played a fandango on the row of buttons on his desk and called aloud for Reilley. "Reilley," he said when his aide poked his head in the door, "I want to ask yuh where you got that pretty little boy yuh call Boston Willie"

"Advertised f'r a college graduate," was Reilley's reply.

"Did he have any references?"

"A wagonload."

"Read 'em?"

"Naw."

"Bring 'em here and deal me about five. I wanta see how my luck is running."

Reilley got the letters of recommendation and reference presented him by Willie.

One was from a friend of Tierney in the United States Secret Service. In effect it said that Willie was just out of college and was hunting excitement. He had handled two cases for the government and had handled them well. "He is afraid of nothing on earth or in the air," wrote Tierney's friend. "His only weak point is his disregard for money. He spends freely."

"What got your goat, Jim!" asked Reilley.

"O, the Angora is all right now," sighed Tierney. "I thought I was being bunked. I'm glad to hear he gets what he goes after. The only thing to worry about is this one sentence, 'He spends freely.' Of course Mr. Phillips is a rich man but if I send him a bill for a new navy to be used entirely by Willie he might peeve."

"A navy?" asked Reilley.

"Yes," replied Tierney. "He's got a seventy-horsepower car, a suite of rooms on the Avener, an airship and, I'll bet, at least forty new little hats and a hundred new little walking sticks. But I told him to get what he wanted."

"But if he sidetracks the gir-rl into marrying a duke or a count it will be all right, won't it, Jim?"

"It will, Mickey," Tierney replied, "but his first report is that last Wednesday he finds the lovers osculatin' in a boskidge over in Jersey."

"Cripes, that's somethin' fierce," said Reilley.

"Yes," mused his chief. "Willie has got to get busy pretty quick or Old Man Phillips will find himself with a wop-in-law on his hands."

CHAPTER IV

WEST of the Palisades the Jersey country rises in slow undulations like the swell after a storm in mid-ocean.

The village of Dumont is perched upon one of the highest of these hills, the top of which is flattened into a well tilled plateau.

At full speed the Phillips' machine swept through the town of Tenafly northward along the country road, took a cross road on the bias, tore through the village of Cresskill and disappeared to the west where the Dumont plateau spreads level with the wooded tops of the distant Palisades.

Behind it came a roaring cloud of dust and gasoline fumes. Boston Willie clung to his wheel, steering the machine more by instinct and faith in the luck of careless youth than by the use of his keen young eyes, for his goggles were encrusted with oily earthflakes torn up by the car ahead.

The two machines fairly leaped to the Dumont plateau. The Phillips' car turned into the farm road of Peter Westervelt and the one behind kept on its way to the farm of Guy Verdon, an ancient native with broad acres and whiskers.

In two big barns a quarter of a mile apart Angelo and Willie got busy twanging the fine wires that held wide-spreading wings to the hollow steel piping frames of two air machines.

It was an early spring afternoon toward the time of the coming of dusk and where the fields were not turned up by the husbandman they showed gold-enwide with dandelions and buttercups.

White clouds were piled in the eastern sky and a faint touch of gold tipped the scrollery of their edges, for the sun was dipping toward the western hills. The air was still save for the evening songs of the robins.

In the Westervelt barn Angelo tied a bit of string about the nifty walking skirt of Ione, hobbling her for safety's sake and not for fashion's. She took her seat behind the little perch of the aviator and Angelo wheeled the machine to a little stretch of clover.

From the Verdon barn Willie Winthrop wheeled his monoplane to a stretch of level which a farmer had cleared of every stick and stone. Then Willie climbed to the hayloft and scanned the Westervelt field through a pair of field glasses. He saw a rival biplane in position and heard its exhaust snapping dully in the distance. He clambered down the ladder and jumped into his seat in the monoplane.

"When'll ye be back, young man?" asked the old farmer.

"God knows," replied Willie. "This is—ah—only my second flight and I have far to go."

"Don't be a danged fule now son," said the Jerseyite kindly.

"Ha!" laughed Willie.

"Any of them flying men git killed down at the city to-day?" asked Verdon.

"Not a one" replied Willie, scanning the heavens above the Westervelt farm. "Four landed on the decks of the Ital-

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ian warship and are now safely stowed below."

The ruffle of propellors sounded across the fields and the biplane with the elopers soared aloft.

Willie gave a warning, threw on his power, took firm hold of his steering levers and was off in pursuit through the air.

Like two great dragonflies the air machines soared in a southeast course. They crossed the Palisades and steered to the south above the gleaming Hudson.

The biplane soared higher and higher in the air, Angelo knowing that he would thus avoid the counter currents of air made by the skyscrapers of downtown New York. Willie's monoplane, like a swallow, soared in its wake.

The gold touching the clouds in the east had deepened to crimson. The evening star was pallid in the skies and far over to the northeast the lights of Coney, Brighton and Manhattan winked in the sunset shadows beneath a crescent moon.

The Italian cruiser *Il Vincitore* had already drawn anchor and was lying, with just enough steam in use to keep her motionless, at the mouth of the Ambrose channel. She was ready to start under full speed for the other side.

The biplane headed for it, dipped, made several wide circles and landed lightly on the aeroplane deck where a swarm of sailors were ready to catch it and hold it fast.

Three pillars of black smoke shot from the funnels of the war vessel as she got under way, gathering a great bone in her teeth as her speed increased.

Above and around her soared Boston Willie in his monoplane.

Thousands of commuters crowding the ferryboats watched, fascinated. They could hear the hum of his propellers.

Nearer and nearer the winged thing circled to the cruiser. With a last downward dip it swept around the fighting masts and then landed on the deck of the speeding vessel.

"Good Lord; what a feat!" cried a harbor skipper. "That birdman must be a lunatic!"

CHAPTER V

A short message from the Italian cruiser by wireless informed Banker Phillips that his daughter was safe aboard her and married to Angelo, the chauffeur.

The multi-millionaire went up into the air with a shriek of rage. When he descended he clamored for secretaries, clerks and messengers to get James Tierney, Incorporated, and bring him immediately to his office. Whenever anything sensational happened among the heinously rich, whether indictment or elopement, the heinously rich immediately affected called in its own private police system.

Tierney was brought before the banker just as a smartly uniformed boy brought in another marconigram.

Phillips tore it open and read:

On Board Cruiser *Il Vincitore*,
Via Marconi.

J. F. Phillips, 40 Wall Street,
New York.

Angelo is the Duke of Torrigiano. Is admiral of the air fleet. Got marriage license in Hackensack. Married on board by ship's chaplain to Ione. Ship inside of three mile limit off Jersey coast. Duchess sends love and joins duke in asking blessings.

WINTHROP.

In the directors' room adjoining the office of the banker a group of financiers were waiting to conclude an important meeting that had kept them downtown until after sunset.

Mr. Phillips let them wait and let Tierney stand nervously in fear of his wrath as he read and and re-read this message:

"Duchess sends love!"

How well it sounded! The cloud of wrath left his ruddy, round face and he stroked his silvery siders with gathering complacency. Another messenger entered the room. He bore a wireless for Mr. Tierney, forwarded from his office.

The Incorporated One took it and opened it with trembling hands. it read:

On Board Cruiser *Il Vincitore*,
Via Marconi.

James Tierney,
Triple Syndicate Bldg., New York.

Could not have stopped marriage without use of battleship. Followed them to the altar in cabin of the commander. Duke is fine fellow. Made me second in command of air fleet of Italian navy. Pay Guy Verdon, Dumont, N. J., two thousand for burning his barn. Good-bye. WINTHROP.

Tierney looked up from the slip of yellow paper. Mr. Phillips had left his chair and was pacing his private office, his chest puffed out and his fat hands clasped behind his back.

"Mr. White," he said, in crisp businesslike tones, "take this message please."

His secretary was ready.

The Duke and Duchess of Torrigiano. Aboard his Italian Majesty's Cruiser *Il Vincitore*, he dictated. Blessings on my children. Cable arrival on other side. Will join you in three weeks at most. FATHER.

He turned to Tierney after a word to his secretary, commending haste in getting the wireless under way.

"There is nothing more to be done," Mr. Tierney," he said. "I thank you very much for putting such an excellent man on an extremely difficult and delicate matter. You might send him a bonus with my compliments."

Tierney grinned feebly.

"Let me have your bill in the morning and I shall send you a check," added the banker.

Mr. Phillips opened the door to the directors' room.

"Gentlemen, I am very sorry to have kept you waiting," he said with large apology, "but only a few moments ago I received the news that my daughter Ione and the Duke of Torrigiano, one of the most illustrious young noblemen of Italy, were married to-day."

As he was receiving his congratulations, proudly Tierney left the banking house and sought a long distance telephone.

He called up Guy Verdon in Dumont, Bergen county, New Jersey. He informed the whiskered farmer that he had received a message from Mr. Winthrop asking him to pay for burning his barn.

"Yes; I burnt it," the voice of the Jerseyite squeaked over the wire. "Is the young man safe?"

"He's safe," replied Tierney. "But what was the celebration about?"

"There warn't no celebration."

"Why did he order you to burn it, then?"

"Why," came the voice from distant Jersey with a little laugh catching in the words, "he's a regular cut-up, that boy is. He sailed away from here just before sundown an' he 'lowed it might be night when he sailed back, if he sailed back at all. So he offers me two thousand dollars for the barn and tells me to light it off after real dark set in, which I did the same. He said he would need a beacon to guide him to his landing place. He's a nice young feller."

Tierney told him he would mail a check in the morning and hung up the receiver. He took a roundabout way to his office, skirting the edge of the financial district until he struck Rose Street. He crossed under the third arch of old Brooklyn Bridge and came to the lowly tavern of one John Murphy at the corner of Rose and Duane. Placing a slippery nickel on Murphy's bar he asked for as large a portion of beer as the money would pay for.

As he sipped from his schooner he muttered to himself:

"One seventy-horsepower car, one aeroplane, one swell flat on the Avener, one large barn, a hundred little hats, two hundred little walking-sticks, one boskidge in Joisey, some hot osculation and one Jook!" He drank the last of the beer.

"But he's got brains, that kid," he added as he slammed through the swinging doors. "He's got brains. If he'd queered that marriage I'd have lost me jawb. Old Man Phillips has got his Jook and he got him dirt cheap as prices go nowadays, believe me."

Well-Woven Evidence

DEAR FRIEND:—It is but a few weeks since I had the pleasure of meeting you again in the house of your brother, and of realizing that I have still the honor of your friendship. At our last meeting we could spend our time in the pleasure of renewing the memories of our youth and of calling up for ourselves equally pleasant hopes for the future. I come in a different matter to-day; in deep distress of mind, and turn to you, not only as friend, but as chief of police. As my friend I would

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like to go into the matter more with personal detail, but as I come to you officially to-day, I will limit myself to a short, concise report, and to the request that you may send me a well-tried and capable criminal official to give me his aid in this unfortunate affair. The matter is as follows:

On Sunday, the 18th of June, the safe in my business office was robbed of the sum of 58,000 marks. As you know, we live here in a small town, and it is not possible for us to take the day's cash to the bank every evening. We are therefore compelled to care for it ourselves for several days. It has always been my practise, however, to avoid allowing more cash to accumulate than we needed for the week's work; ten, or, at the most, fifteen thousand marks were usually all that we had in our safe. This Sunday in question, however, there had been an unusual number of large payments the day before, which had been sent to us direct, instead of, as usual, to our bank in Hamburg. The cause for this had been a private exhibition in our building of a number of new wares, new designs and textures, for the inspection of which representatives of our most important clients had come in person. They had taken this opportunity to pay off bills which had been allowed to run on for some time. The gentlemen all left us by Saturday evening, and on Sunday morning my cashier and myself went over the money in the safe and checked off the amounts again. Therefore the theft must have occurred either on Sunday afternoon or during the night from Sunday to Monday; of course I cannot tell which; but when I entered my office on Monday morning I found my clerks in great excitement. The window panes had been smeared with soap and broken in from the outside, the large safe had been moved from the wall and the back broken in. All the gold and paper money, to the amount above mentioned, was gone, but the envelopes with drafts had been untouched.

There were no other strangers present when the payments were made. There remains, therefore, only the, to me, very sad explanation that some member of my business force must have thus ill repaid my confidence. I could easily lose the actual amount of money, but my relations with my employees are such that the thought that I might find the thief among them would depress me most terribly. There is nothing proven as yet, and I can still hope that some outsider may have committed this crime —indeed I wish from the bottom of my heart that it may be so. But our researches hitherto have proved absolutely nothing. If you can send me one of your men I will be very grateful for it. And I would be particularly grateful to you if you could telegraph me at once if I may expect anyone and whom. In old friendship,

JOHANN HEINRICH BEHREND.

P. S.—Simply to complete my report, not because I believe it to be of any importance, I would add that the thief took also a large package of lace curtains which lay in my own private office.

J. H. B.

Commissioner Wolff dropped the letter and sat in deep thought. Then he turned his cold gray eyes on his chief and asked in a business-like tone:

"You'll allow me a few questions, sir?"

Police-senator Lachmann nodded.

"Mr. Behrend has been a friend of yours from your youth?"

"We were at school together and have been friends ever since."

"May I ask what is meant by the pleasant hopes for the future of which Mr. Behrend speaks?"

The senator was silent a moment. Then he said, "Why, yes, of course. I know you so long and have given you so much confidence already that I feel sure of your discretion in what is purely a personal family matter. I have, as you know, an only daughter. It is the heartfelt wish of the parents in both families that my child and my friend's son should be united in a bond that will bring us all still closer together."

"Thank you, sir. When will you send the answer to Mr. Behrend?"

"At once, I thought."

"May I ask that you do not telegraph?"

"Certainly. I will send a letter if you prefer, and you may dictate it yourself. I will send it with a personal letter of my own."

The commissioner took Behrend's letter and the newspaper and went out. He returned in fifteen minutes and handed his chief the following letter to be signed:

Mr. Johann Heinrich Behrend, Sr.,
Neuenfelde, Holstein:

Sir:—Permit me to inform you herewith that I have given our Criminal Commissioner Wolff the necessary leave to make researches into the affair of the robbery from your office. I am sorry to say, however, that the commissioner is still occupied in the investigation of another crime, and that it will be several days before he is able to leave here. At the latest you may expect him in four days, however, and his work for you will begin at once after his arrival. As you are still continuing your own researches I hope that the small delay will not be of any importance. The unavoidable delay before our office was notified at all has already given the thief an opportunity to put himself and his loot in safety. The commissioner has his orders to report to you personally at once on his arrival.

CHIEF OF POLICE LACHMANN.

Senator Lachmann could not control a slight smile. "To-day is Friday—hm—according to this they will not expect you before Monday—hm." He signed the letter. "When do you start?"

"In an hour, sir."

"And when will you be in Neuenfelde?"

"This evening, sir."

* * * *

A single passenger descended from the ten o'clock train of the same evening in Neuenfelde, a gentleman of military bearing, in clothes of fashionable cut, with a sharply marked face and cold gray eyes.

He proceeded to the office of the firm of Johann Heinrich Behrend & Son.

A servant in a quiet gray livery took his card and handed it to the chief of the firm. Mr. Behrend, Sr., read the card carefully: GEORGE ENGEL, REPRESENTING HARRY S. EGGER & SON, LONDON AND BERLIN.

"Take the gentleman to Mr. Juritz, Franz," he said. "I will be glad when my son is at home again. This affair has made me so nervous that I dislike to see anybody new."

"Just as you say, sir." Franz threw an anxious glance at his master and went out.

Bernhard Juritz's office lay next to that of his employer, another door leading from it into the room where the safe stood. The cashier sat in a comfortable armchair, and pressed his hand to his forehead when the servant brought him the card, as if he had first to collect his thoughts, and bring himself back to the affairs of everyday life.

"Send for Detlev." When the clerk had entered Juritz asked, reading aloud the name and the firm on the card, "Has this gentleman been announced to us?"

"No, Mr. Juritz."

"Thank you." He dismissed the clerk with a wave of his hand.

"Mr. Behrend told me to send him to you," remarked the servant.

"All right, send him in."

He turned over some letters but rose from his chair as Engel entered. The latter's manner was so decided in his firm politeness that he compelled an equal attitude.

"What can I do for you?"

When they had both seated themselves, Engel told his errand in a few words. The London firm which he represented was to open a branch shop in Berlin, and he had been appointed manager. The Berlin branch desired to accord all honor to any German national sentiments and to acquire a good stock of home-made wares, as well as those of foreign make. It was his duty to seek out the most important manufacturers of the country, and eventually to sign for the orders. The firm of Behrend & Son had such an excellent reputation that it was to them at first that he had come, to examine the factory and the specimens of their work, and to place his orders at once if all should be as he expected.

While Engel was speaking, Juritz had taken up a paper-knife with which his fingers played mechanically. Engel's sharp gray eyes glanced keenly at the man opposite him.

Juritz's sharp-featured face showed energy, but the dull glance of his eyes and the foolish play with the evidently unheeded instrument in his hands showed a physical and mental weakening, for the moment at least. His low forehead and broad, full-lipped mouth pointed to strong animal desires, and the dark rings about his eyes were evidence of dissipation.

When Engel had finished the cashier turned to him, and the dullness of his eyes brightened just a trifle.

"Your orders will be large ones, presumably?" he asked.

"From 100,000 to 150,000 marks' worth."

"Hm! well, then you of course will excuse me if I make my investigations as to what security your firm offers for such a large sum."

"Naturally. The German Bank in Hamburg, which is in constant connection with our London house, will give you all information. Besides this, it is our custom to pay cash on all our orders."

The cashier wrote down a few notes. Even in the most important houses the

prospect of orders of such size would have awakened considerable interest and attention. Juritz remained absolutely calm.

"We are very appreciative of your coming to us, Mr. Engel. You may be sure that if we do close our dealings, we will serve you in the best manner. I am taking for granted that you will remain here for several days? Then you will perhaps come at this time tomorrow? I will report to my chief and will ask that he see you himself."

* * * *

Late that afternoon the Behrend carriage drove past the Inn. It contained Mr. Juritz and another gentleman.

"Aha! the secret agent," cried the landlord, who stood at the window with Engel.

"The secret agent?" repeated the stranger.

"The one they sent us from Kiel, I mean, the criminal official. He's driving with Juritz."

"Are they out for fun?"

"Probably. Or they may have found a new clue. They have been driving around through all the villages in the neighborhood for the last week. The local authorities watch every man who comes or goes from any of these places."

"Hm! Mr Juritz and his companions take things easy," said Engel. "I think I'll take a little walk myself," he added, and went out, turning his steps towards the Behrend house. When he had learned that the head of the firm was at home, he sent in his card and was received at once.

Mr. Behrend arose at his entrance and, after greeting him, pointed to an inviting-looking armchair which stood beside his large desk.

"My representative has told me of the very flattering connections that you may possibly make with us. Permit me to give you my thanks, and to say that we will endeavor to show our appreciation of your confidence in every way."

The old gentleman's manner and tone were so full of quiet dignity that his visitor felt drawn to him at once. Behrend, Sr., was not particularly imposing in appearance, not quite so much so as Engel had imagined he should be as the head of a great enterprise, and a self-made man. But the high forehead and clear eyes of the delicate looking man of scarcely medium height had an expression of such high intelligence that it was quite easy to understand his success.

"May I ask your permission to drop business for to-day?" asked Engel. "I am come now to tell you of my sincere sympathy for you in this unfortunate affair which has recently happened in your house. During the past few weeks I have been traveling a great deal, and while in Paris chance brought me together with the head of the Hamburg firm, Lachmann & Co. From them I heard much about you and your splendid business; of course they knew nothing then of this unfortunate robbery. I learned of it first here and wish to assure you of my sympathy."

Behrend gave him his hand.

"Many thanks. Yes, fate has dealt hardly with me. I do not understand it at all yet myself. It may even remain a riddle forever—in fact, I do not know whether I perhaps myself do not wish that it may. So you met Lach-

mann in Paris? I have known him from my youth and have just now requested his brother, who, as you may know, is the head of the Hamburg police force, to send me a capable official who may be able to throw some light on this sad affair. I am sorry to say that the official who has been chosen cannot be expected before Monday or Tuesday—several days more without any help, therefore."

Behrend shook his gray head. It was evident that the affair depressed him deeply. There was something almost pathetically helpless in his attitude when speaking about it.

"Yes, I know the brother is senator. I have known the family for years, through our London house. I met the senator's daughter—his only child, I believe—a couple of years ago in Heligoland. She is a young lady of unusual beauty, and I believe of great character also. She was just nineteen years old then."

A charming smile brightened Behrend's face.

"Yes, indeed," he said, "Hedwig Lachmann is a sweet child, pure, and true as gold."

Behrend continued the conversation about the family of his friend for some little time, and Engel, who seemed to know them all very well, won his confidence rapidly. He came back, finally, to the question of the robbery, and was able to put the old gentleman through what was almost a cross-examination without his realizing it.

"And you have no suspicion of anybody?" he asked.

"How should I? I believe firmly that none of my employees could have had anything to do with it. The official from Kiel joins me in this opinion, as does my cashier. But in spite of this Juritz has made researches among the men, very carefully but very thoroughly, without any result whatever—or with one result, at least, that we now know that our confidence has not been deceived."

"That would, indeed, be a cause for rejoicing. Have they found any clue on the outside?"

"Not the slightest."

"And the thieves left nothing behind them that might betray them?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Ah, indeed! that certainly does look like professional work. The case begins to interest me. Might I see the safe, Mr. Behrend; I mean the damaged one?"

Behrend rose at once and led his guest into the strong room. The offices were empty, only the servant Franz was busy in one of the rooms.

The safe still stood where it had been pushed out from the wall. The back had been literally torn apart. Engel recognized at once that it had been done by the strongest sort of instruments used by professional thieves. He noticed one thing: the fact that of the two compartments used for money, which were closed with their own particular doors, only one had been opened. Had the thief known that the currency was kept in this compartment? or had it been mere chance that led him to this place first? In this case he might have had enough in the rich booty that he found there, and did not care to seek further. Engel was so lost in thought that the manufacturer had to

repeat his request that they might now drop this unpleasant theme.

"I suppose you feel the same as I do," said Behrend, smiling. "I had never seen anything like that before, and the sight fascinated me. But now come with me and do me the honor to take supper with us. My wife will join with me in greeting you as our guest."

* * * *

The large drawing-room was full of warm comfort. Engel's glance fell again and again on the superb lace curtains that hung before the high windows.

"Those are really quite the handsomest curtains I have ever seen," he said finally. "The design is superb and the workmanship really remarkable. I must congratulate you; they are your own manufacture, I suppose?"

"Yes, indeed, and they are the pride of my good Juritz. The design was made for the Russian Prince Perkalow, and has not been put on the market at all. There in the middle, where you see my monogram, the other specimens have the monogram of the prince, with his coronet. With the permission of the prince I kept back two pieces of the original set, which I hoped to exhibit sometime. But it was just these curtains that our friend the robber took with him. The gentleman certainly has artistic taste, has he not?"

The examination of the factory next morning took about an hour. Juritz was a good leader and explained everything clearly. Engel listened and looked in silence, showing his attention by an occasional single word or nod. He bade farewell to the cashier and sent in his card to the head of the firm. Mr. Behrend was engaged and the visitor had to wait in an anteroom. On the table here lay an album, which he began to study with interest. The large volume held at least five hundred photographs, evidently employees of the firm. Engel turned the leaves hastily. On the first page was a large picture of the chief, all by itself. Then, on the next side, not Juritz's face as he had hoped, but that of someone unknown to him. They were evidently arranged according to time of service. Engel turned over the next leaf. Yes, there it was, Juritz's characteristic countenance. With a quick motion Engel removed the picture from the book and slipped it into his pocket. Then he called the servant; "I am afraid I should only disturb Mr. Behrend now. Tell him that I can come to-morrow morning just as well."

He left the building and went to the railway station. "Second-class, Kiel, excursion." He arrived at noon and went at once to the police station.

When he had sent in his card he explained: "I am a friend of the firm Behrend & Son, and would like to take some more active interest in the researches into this mysterious robbery. I believe I have discovered a clue and would like to put in a request for official aid. Should I be mistaken, nothing need be said about it; but if I am not mistaken, the police can only be grateful to me. What I have discovered is this: One of the employees of the firm—his name need not be mentioned as yet—is frequently absent from Neuenfelde, and is said to be here in Kiel, on pleasure bent. He leaves Saturday evening and returns Sunday evening or very early Monday morning. From

hints let drop by people in Neuenfelde, I understand that the gentleman leads a rather gay life here, and to discover the truth of this is the reason for my coming. Here is his photograph. I would ask that you would let it circulate among your officials that we may find out whether any of them has ever seen the gentleman, and where."

The picture wandered from hand to hand through the rooms until finally a policeman declared that he had seen the gentleman not very long ago—two or three Sundays past perhaps, in the restaurant Wriedt, where he was frequently stationed. The gentleman was there with a lady.

"Did you know the lady?" asked Engel.

"No, sir."

"She was not one of the gay world?"

"I think not, sir. She was very well dressed, but not in any way conspicuous."

Engel took an official with him and started out for the restaurant. And here he let the picture circulate again. In a few moments one of the waiters declared decidedly that he knew the gentleman, and that he also knew the name of the lady: "Lore Düfken." He had often heard her called Lore, and once when the gentleman had introduced her to someone else, he had heard her last name. He had remembered it because it was so like his own, which was Düfke.

"Does the gentleman spend much money here?" asked the police official.

"He has a couple of bottles of wine usually, and he orders champagne occasionally, but his bills are no larger than those of many others."

It was easy to discover the address of the lady in question through the official Census Lists.

"Since you are acting on a mere suspicion," the official said to his energetic companion, "you had better be very careful. What excuse will you use to enter the apartment?"

Engel smiled. "That is very simple. When going up the stairs I will remember any one of the names on the doors and ask for information about the owner of it. Don't you think you could use me in your business?"

"Don't be too sure of yourself. I will wait at the next corner there, in the cigar store."

Engel climbed the stairs and rang the bell at the door upon which stood the name "B. Düfken, widow."

An elderly woman opened the door.

"Have I the honor of speaking to Mrs. Düfken?"

"Yes, what may I——" She interrupted herself and looked sharply at the gentleman, whose decidedly aristocratic appearance made her appear to doubt whether it was proper to let him stand outside the door. "Won't you please come in? I will be at your service in a moment."

Engel entered a little reception room, the attractive furnishing of which held his attention at once. The question arose in his mind as to where all these evidences of riches came from. The furniture, in English style, was noticeably new. The chairs and tables, the upholstery, were perfect in finish. The only part of the room that showed any use at all was the heavy carpet. The ladies who lived here must be very well off—or else this extravagant outfit was very much out of place and was not

here by right or reason. This last opinion grew more decided in Engel's mind when the woman entered again and he could see her in the clear light of the room. There was nothing refined or aristocratic in her appearance, her manner was awkward, her clothing very ordinary. She was one of a kind that could be seen by the hundred anywhere, a woman brought up in quite other surroundings than these, and who had evidently not yet been able to adapt herself to affluence.

Engel carried out his purpose and asked about the gentleman who lived on the floor below. The old lady was evidently a gossip, and had so much to say about her neighbor that it was very easy for her visitor to lengthen the time of his stay and to win her confidence. When he could find absolutely nothing more to say about the gentleman on the floor below, he began to compliment the woman on her beautiful home.

"My dear madame," he said with apparent eagerness, "if I were not afraid of asking too much of your kindness I would make still one more request. Would you be kind enough to show a stranger like myself the other rooms of your charming home, which I know are just as attractive as this one?"

The woman smiled, evidently flattered. "Why, of course, if it really interests you," she said.

"But please do not do it if it disturbs you in the least," said Engel in polite entreaty.

She opened a side door. "This is our finest room, our drawing-room." She led Engel into a large corner room, which was furnished and decorated throughout in rococo style. It was all of the very best, and quite expensive enough to be absolutely out of keeping with the owner of it.

In the next room they found a young woman in a white house-gown, who turned her bright brown eyes on the stranger in curiosity, and then quickly pushed aside her work, which covered almost half the floor, so that they might enter. The young lady, evidently the daughter of the other woman, was very pretty, slender, and graceful, with a delicate face and attractive expression. Her movements were extremely elastic and noticeably graceful, so much so that she would have attracted Engel's attention had his eyes not fallen on the curtain spread on the floor. It was a heavy lace curtain of richest design and workmanship. A similar—no, the identical design of those he had seen in the Villa Behrend! And there, half ripped out, was a monogram with a coronet.

Engel had to struggle for control. "My dear young lady," he said, "I must beg your pardon for this invasion. I am afraid I have disturbed you."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," answered the girl, with a sweet, rich voice. She noticed the interest with which her visitor looked at the curtain and she continued with a laugh, "Isn't it pretty? but look at this coronet here! What should we want with a coronet? I am just ripping it out, and it's no easy work, I assure you!"

"The curtains are a present, I suppose?"

"Yes, my fiancé gave them to me. The design was made for some foreign prince, and he is the only one, besides us, who has such curtains—except a

thief who stole the last samples from the factory. Nice sort of company to be in, isn't it?" She said the words quite harmlessly, with a touch of humor.

"Stolen?" asked Engel.

"Yes, last Saturday, my fiancé—but no one knows of our engagement as yet—sent these curtains here, and during the night from Sunday to Monday, the last two samples were stolen from the factory, when the safe was robbed."

"A safe robbery? How interesting!" asked Engel, as if in surprise.

"Why, yes, in the house of Behrend & Son, in Neuenfelde. Hadn't you heard of it? The papers were full of it." And she told her visitor all she knew about the robbery, in her interest letting the fact escape her that her fiancé's name was Juritz.

* * * *

In the autumn of the following year the wedding of Behrend with the daughter of Senator Lachmann was celebrated, and a most welcome guest at the festivities was Commissioner Wolff, now called by his colleagues in the office, "The Angel of the Lace Curtains."

The Bet

CHAPTER I

It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was pacing from corner to corner of his study, recalling to his mind the party he gave in the autumn fifteen years before. There were many clever people at the party and much interesting conversation. They talked among other things of capital punishment. The guests, among them not a few scholars and journalists, for the most part disapproved of capital punishment. They found it obsolete as a means of punishment, unfitted to a Christian State, and immoral. Some of them thought that capital punishment should be replaced universally by life-imprisonment.

"I don't agree with you," said the host. "I myself have experienced neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment, but if one may judge *a priori*, then in my opinion capital punishment is more moral and more humane than imprisonment. Execution kills instantly, life-imprisonment kills by degrees. Who is the more humane executioner, one who kills you in a few seconds or one who draws the life out of you incessantly, for years?"

"They're both equally immoral," remarked one of the guests, "because their purpose is the same, to take away life. The State is not God. It has no right to take away that which it cannot give back, if it should so desire."

Among the company was a lawyer, a young man of about twenty-five. On being asked his opinion, he said:

"Capital punishment and life-imprisonment are equally immoral; but if I were offered the choice between them, I would certainly choose the second. It's better to live somehow than not to live at all."

There ensued a lively discussion. The banker, who was then younger and more nervous, suddenly lost his temper, banged his fist on the table, and turning to the young lawyer, cried out:

"It's a lie. I bet you two millions you wouldn't stick in a cell even for five years."

"If you mean it seriously," replied the lawyer, "then I bet I'll stay not five but fifteen."

"Fifteen! Done!" cried the banker. "Gentlemen, I stake two millions."

"Agreed. You stake two millions, I my freedom," said the lawyer.

So this wild, ridiculous bet came to pass. The banker, who at that time had too many millions to count, spoiled and capricious, was beside himself with rapture. During supper he said to the lawyer jokingly:

"Come to your senses, young man, before it's too late. Two millions are nothing to me, but you stand to lose three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you'll never stick it out any longer. Don't forget, either, you unhappy man, that voluntary is much heavier than enforced imprisonment. The idea that you have the right to free yourself at any moment will poison the whole of your life in the cell. I pity you."

And now the banker, pacing from corner to corner, recalled all this and asked himself:

"Why did I make this bet? What's the good? The lawyer loses fifteen years of his life and I throw away two millions. Will it convince people that capital punishment is worse or better than imprisonment for life? No, no! all stuff and rubbish. On my part, it was the caprice of a well-fed man; on the lawyer's pure greed of gold."

He recollected further what happened after the evening party. It was decided that the lawyer must undergo his imprisonment under the strictest observation, in a garden wing of the banker's house. It was agreed that during the period he would be deprived of the right to cross the threshold, to see living people, to hear human voices, and to receive letters and newspapers. He was permitted to have a musical instrument, to read books, to write letters, to drink wine and smoke tobacco. By the agreement he could communicate, but only in silence, with the outside world through a little window specially constructed for this purpose. Everything necessary, books, music, wine, he could receive in any quantity by sending a note through the window. The agreement provided for all the minutest details, which made the confinement strictly solitary, and it obliged the lawyer to remain exactly fifteen years from twelve o'clock of November 14th, 1870, to twelve o'clock of November 14th, 1885. The least attempt on his part to violate the conditions, to escape if only for two minutes before the time freed the banker from the obligation to pay him the two millions.

During the first year of imprisonment, the lawyer, so far as it was possible to judge from his short notes, suffered terribly from loneliness and boredom. From his wing day and night came the sound of the piano. He rejected wine and tobacco. "Wine," he wrote, "excites desires, and desires are the chief foes of a prisoner; besides, nothing is more boring than to drink good wine alone, and tobacco spoils the air in his room." During the first year the lawyer was sent books of a light character; novels with a complicated love interest, stories of crime and fantasy, comedies, and so on.

In the second year the piano was heard no longer and the lawyer asked only for classics. In the fifth year, music was heard again, and the prisoner asked for wine. Those who watched him said that during the whole of that year he was only eating, drinking, and lying on his bed. He yawned often and talked angrily to himself. Books he did not read. Sometimes at night he would sit down to write. He would write for a long time and tear it all up in the morning. More than once he was heard to weep.

In the second half of the sixth year, the prisoner began zealously to study languages, philosophy, and history. He fell on these subjects so hungrily that the banker hardly had time to get books enough for him. In the space of four years about six hundred volumes were bought at his request. It was while that passion lasted that the banker received the following letter from the prisoner: "My dear gaoler, I am writing these lines in six languages. Show them to experts. Let them read them. If they do not find one single mistake, I beg you to give orders to have a gun fired off in the garden. By the noise I shall know that my efforts have not been in vain. The geniuses of all ages and countries speak in different languages but in them all burns the same flame. Oh, if you knew my heavenly happiness now that I can understand them!" The prisoner's desire was fulfilled. Two shots were fired in the garden by the banker's order.

Later on, after the tenth year, the lawyer sat immovable before his table and read only the New Testament. The banker found it strange that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred erudite volumes, should have spent nearly a year in reading one book, easy to understand and by no means thick. The New Testament was then replaced by the history of religions and theology.

During the last two years of his confinement the prisoner read an extraordinary amount, quite haphazard. Now he would apply himself to the natural sciences, then he would read Byron or Shakespeare. Notes used to come from him in which he asked to be sent at the same time a book on chemistry, a text-book of medicine, a novel, and some treatise on philosophy or theology. He read as though he were swimming in the sea among broken pieces of wreckage, and in his desire to save his life was eagerly grasping one piece after another.

CHAPTER II

THE banker recalled all this, and thought:

"To-morrow at twelve o'clock he receives his freedom. Under the agreement, I shall have to pay him two millions. If I pay, it's all over with me. I am ruined forever . . ."

Fifteen years before he had too many millions to count, but now he was afraid to ask himself which he had more of, money or debts. Gambling on the Stock-Exchange, risky speculation, and the recklessness of which he could not rid himself even in old age, had gradually brought his business to decay; and the fearless, self-confident, proud man of business had become an ordinary banker, trembling at every rise and fall in the market.

"That cursed bet," murmured the old man clutching his head in despair . . . "Why didn't the man die? He's only forty years old. He will take away my last farthing, marry, enjoy life, gamble on the Exchange, and I will look on life an envious beggar and hear the same words from him every day: 'I'm obliged to you for the happiness of my life. Let me help you.' No, it's too much! The only escape from bankruptcy and disgrace—is that the man should die."

The clock had just struck three. The banker was listening. In the house every one was asleep, and one could hear only the frozen trees whining outside the windows. Trying to make no sound, he took out of his safe the key of the door which had not been opened for fifteen years, put on his overcoat, and went out of the house. The garden was dark and cold. It was raining. A damp, penetrating wind howled in the garden and gave the trees no rest. Though he strained his eyes, the banker could see neither the ground, nor the white statues, nor the garden wing, nor the trees. Approaching the garden wing, he called the watchman twice. There was no answer. Evidently the watchman had taken shelter from the bad weather and was now asleep somewhere in the kitchen or the greenhouse.

"If I have the courage to fulfil my intention," thought the old man, "the suspicion will fall on the watchman first of all."

In the darkness he groped for the steps and the door and entered the hall of the garden-wing, then poked his way into a narrow passage and struck a match. Not a soul was there. Some one's bed, with no bedclothes on it, stood there, and an iron stove loomed dark in the corner. The seals on the door that led into the prisoner's room were unbroken.

When the match went out, the old man, trembling from agitation, peeped into the little window.

In the prisoner's room a candle was burning dimly. The prisoner himself sat by the table. Only his back, the hair on his head and his hands were visible. Open books were strewn about on the table, the two chairs, and on the carpet near the table.

Five minutes passed and the prisoner never once stirred. Fifteen years' confinement had taught him to sit motionless. The banker tapped on the window with his finger, but the prisoner made no movement in reply.

Then the banker cautiously tore the seals from the door and put the key into the lock. The rusty lock gave a hoarse groan and the door creaked. The banker expected to hear a cry of surprise and the sound of steps. Three minutes passed and it was as quiet inside as it had been before. He made up his mind to enter.

Before the table sat a man, unlike an ordinary human being. It was a skeleton, with a tight-drawn skin, with long curly hair like a woman's, and a shaggy beard. The colour of the face was yellow, of an earthy shade, the cheeks were sunken, the back long and narrow, and the hand upon which he leaned his hairy head was so lean and skinny that it was painful to look upon. His hair was already silvering with grey, and no one who glanced at the senile emaciation of the face would have believed that he was only forty years old. On the table, before his bended head, lay a sheet of paper on which something had been written in a tiny hand.

"Poor devil," thought the banker, "he's asleep and probably seeing millions in his dreams. I have only to take and throw this half-dead thing on the bed, smother him a moment with the pillow, and the most careful examination will find no trace of unnatural death. But, first, let us read what he has written here."

The banker took the sheet from the table and read:

"To-morrow at twelve o'clock midnight, I shall obtain my freedom and the right to mix with people. But before I leave this room and see the sun I think it necessary to say a few words to you. On my own clear conscience and before God who sees me I declare to you that I despise freedom, life, health, and all that your books call the blessings of the world.

"For fifteen years I have diligently studied earthly life. True, I saw neither the earth nor the people, but in your books I drank fragrant wine, sang songs, hunted deer and wild boar in the forests, loved women. . . . And beautiful women, like clouds ethereal, created by the magic of your poets' genius, visited me by night and whispered to me wondrous tales, which made my head drunken. In your books I climbed the summits of Elbruz and Mont Blanc and saw from there how the sun rose in the morning, and in the evening suffused the sky, the ocean and the mountain ridges with a purple gold. I saw from there how above me lightnings glimmered cleaving the clouds; I saw green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, cities; I heard syrens singing, and the playing of the pipes of Pan; I touched the wings of beautiful devils who came flying to me to speak of God. . . . In your books I cast myself into bottomless abysses, worked miracles, burned cities to the ground, preached new religions, conquered whole countries. . . .

"Your books gave me wisdom. All that unwearying human thought created in the centuries is compressed to a little lump in my skull. I know that I am cleverer than you all.

"And I despise your books, despise all worldly blessings and wisdom. Everything is void, frail, visionary and delusive as a mirage. Though you be proud and wise and beautiful, yet will

death wipe you from the face of the earth like the mice underground; and your posterity, your history, and the immortality of your men of genius will be as frozen slag, burnt down together with the terrestrial globe.

"You are mad, and gone the wrong way. You take falsehood for truth, and ugliness for beauty. You would marvel if suddenly apple and orange trees should bear frogs and lizards instead of fruit, and if roses should begin to breathe the odour of a sweating horse. So do I marvel at you, who have bartered heaven for earth. I do not want to understand you.

"That I may show you in deed my contempt by which you live, I waive the two millions of which I once dreamed as of paradise, and which I now despise. That I may deprive myself of the right to them, I shall come out from here five minutes before the stipulated term, and thus shall violate the agreement."

When he had read, the banker put the sheet on the table, kissed the head of the strange man, and began to weep. He went out of the wing. Never at any other time, not even after his terrible losses on the Exchange, had he felt such contempt for himself as now. Coming home, he lay down on his bed, but agitation and tears kept him a long time from sleeping. . . .

The next morning the poor watchman came running to him and told him that they had seen the man who lived in the wing climb through the window into the garden. He had gone to the gate and disappeared. The banker instantly went with his servants to the wing and estabished the escape of his prisoner. To avoid unnecessary rumours he took the paper with the renunciation from the table and, on his return, locked it in his safe.

Too Dear

Near the borders of France and Italy, on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, lies a tiny little kingdom called Monaco. Many a small country town can boast more inhabitants than this kingdom, for there are only about seven thousand of them all told, and if all the land in the kingdom were divided there would not be an acre for each inhabitant. But in this toy kingdom there is a real kinglet; and he has a palace, and courtiers, and ministers, and a bishop, and generals, and an army.

It is not a large army, only sixty men in all, but still it is an army. There were also taxes in this kingdom, as elsewhere: a tax on tobacco, and on wine and spirits, and a poll-tax. But though the people there drink and

smoke as people do in other countries, there are so few of them that the King would have been hard put to it to feed his courtiers and officials and to keep himself, if he had not found a new and special source of revenue. This special revenue comes from a gaming house, where people play roulette. People play, and whether they win or lose the keeper always gets a percentage of the turnover; and out of his profits he pays a large sum to the King. The reason he pays so much is that it is the only such gambling establishment left in Europe. Some of the little German sovereigns used to keep gaming houses of the same kind, but some years ago they were forbidden to do so. The reason they were stopped was because these gaming houses did so much harm. A man would come and try his luck, then he would risk all he had and lose it, then he would even risk money that did not belong to him and lose that, too, and then, in despair, he would drown or shoot himself. So the Germans forbade their rulers to make money in this way; but there was no one to stop the King of Monaco, and he remained with a monopoly of the business.

So now every one who wants to gamble goes to Monaco. Whether they win or lose, the King gains by it. "You can't earn stone palaces by honest labour," as the proverb says; and the Kinglet of Monaco knows it is a dirty business, but what is he to do? He has to live; and to draw a revenue from drink and from tobacco is also not a nice thing. So he lives and reigns, and rakes in the money, and holds his court with all the ceremony of a real king.

He has his coronation, his levees; he rewards, sentences, and pardons; and he also has his reviews, councils, laws, and courts of justice: just like other kings, only all on a smaller scale.

Now it happened a few years ago that a murder was committed in this toy King's domains. The people of that kingdom are peaceable, and such a thing had not happened before. The judges assembled with much ceremony and tried the case in the most judicial manner. There were judges, and prosecutors, and jurymen and barristers. They argued and judged, and at last they condemned the criminal to have his head cut off as the law directs. So far so good. Next they submitted the sentence to the King. The King read the sentence and confirmed it. "If the fellow must be executed, execute him."

There was only one hitch in the matter; and that was that they had neither a guillotine for cutting heads off, nor the executioner. The Ministers considered the matter, and decided to address an inquiry to the French government, asking whether the French could not lend them a machine and an expert to cut off the criminal's head; and if so, would the French kindly inform them what the cost would be. The letter was sent. A week later the reply came: a machine and an expert could be supplied, and the cost would be 16,000 francs. This was laid before the King. He thought it over. Sixteen thousand francs! "The wretch is not worth the money," said he. "Can't it be done,

somehow, cheaper? Why, 16,000 francs is more than two francs a head on the whole population. The people won't stand it, and it may cause a riot!"

So a Council was called to consider what could be done; and it was decided to send a similar inquiry to the King of Italy. The French government is republican, and has no proper respect for kings; but the King of Italy was a brother monarch, and might be induced to do the thing cheaper. So the letter was written, and a prompt reply was received.

The Italian government wrote that they would have pleasure in supplying both a machine and an expert; and the whole cost would be 12,000 francs, including travelling expenses. This was cheaper, but still it seemed too much. The rascal was really not worth the money. It would still mean nearly two francs more per head on the taxes. Another Council was called. They discussed and considered how it could be done with less expense. Could not one of the soldiers, perhaps, be got to do it in a rough and homely fashion? The General was called and was asked: "Can't you find us a soldier who would cut the man's head off? In war they don't mind killing people. In fact, that is what they are trained for." So the General talked it over with the soldiers to see whether one of them would not undertake the job. But none of the soldiers would do it. "No," they said, "we don't know how to do it; it is not a thing we have been taught."

What was to be done? Again Ministers considered and reconsidered. They assembled a Commission, and a Committee, and a Sub-Committee, and at last they decided that the best thing would be to alter the death sentence to one of imprisonment for life. This would enable the King to show his mercy, and it would come cheaper.

The King agreed to this, and so the matter was arranged. The only hitch now was that there was no suitable prison for a man sentenced for life. There was a small lock-up where people were sometimes kept temporarily, but there was no strong prison fit for permanent use. However, they managed to find a place that would do, and they put the young fellow there and placed a guard over him. The guard had to watch the criminal, and had also to fetch his food from the palace kitchen.

The prisoner remained there month after month until a year had passed. But when a year had passed, the Kinglet, looking over the account of his income and expenditure one day, noticed a new item of expenditure. This was for the keep of the criminal; nor was it a small item either. There was a special guard, and there was also the man's food. It came to more than 600 francs a year. And the worst of it was that the fellow was still young and healthy, and might live for fifty years. When one came to reckon it up, the matter was serious. It would never do. So the King summoned his Ministers and said to them:

"You must find some cheaper way of dealing with this rascal. The present plan is too expensive." And the Ministers met and considered and reconsidered, till one of them said:

"Gentlemen, in my opinion we must dismiss the guard." "But then," rejoined another Minister, "the fellow will run away." "Well," said the first speaker, "let him run away, and be hanged to him!" So they reported the result of their deliberations to the Kinglet, and he agreed with them. The guard was dismissed, and they waited to see what would happen. All that happened was that at dinner-time the criminal came out, and, not finding his guard, he went to the King's kitchen to fetch his own dinner. He took what was given him, returned to the prison, shut the door on himself, and stayed inside. Next day the same thing occurred. He went for his food at the proper time; but as for running away, he did not show the least sign of it! What was to be done? They considered the matter again.

"We shall have to tell him straight out," said they, "that we do not want to keep him." So the Minister of Justice had him brought before him.

"Why do you not run away?" said the Minister. "There is no guard to keep you. You can go where you like, and the King will not mind."

"I daresay the King would not mind," replied the man, "but I have nowhere to go. What can I do? You have ruined my character by your sentence, and people will turn their backs on me. Besides, I have got out of the way of working. You have treated me badly. It is not fair. In the first place, when once you sentenced me to death you ought to have executed me; but you did not do it. That's one thing. I did not complain about that. Then you sentenced me to imprisonment for life and put a guard to bring me my food; but after a time you took him away again and I had to fetch my own food. Again I did not complain. But now you actually want me to go away! I can't agree to that. You may do as you like, but I won't go away!"

What was to be done? Once more the Council was summoned. What course could they adopt? The man would not go. They reflected and considered. The only way to get rid of him was to offer him a pension. And so they reported to the King. "There is nothing else for it," said they; "we must get rid of him somehow." The sum fixed was 600 francs, and this was announced to the prisoner.

"Well," said he, "I don't mind, so long as you undertake to pay it regularly. On that condition I am willing to go."

So the matter was settled. He received one-third of his annuity in advance, and left the King's dominions. It was only a quarter of an hour by rail; and he emigrated, and settled just across the frontier, where he bought a bit of land, started market-gardening, and now lives comfortably. He always goes at the proper time to draw his pension. Having received it he goes to the gaming tables, stakes two or three francs, sometimes wins and sometimes loses, and then returns home. He lives peaceably and well.

It is a good thing that he did not commit his crime in a country where they do not grudge expense to cut a man's head off, or to keep him in prison for life.

The Courageous Hunchback Woman

"Shall we go to the barn?" said the doctor laying a hand on Genestas's arm. They had taken leave of the curé and the other guests. "You will hear them talking about Napoleon, Captain Bluteau. Goguelat, the postman, is there, and there are several of his cronies who are sure to draw him out on the subject of the idol of the people. Nicolle, my stableman, has set a ladder so that we can climb up on the hay; there is a place from which we can look down on the whole scene. Come along, an upsitting is something worth seeing, believe me. It will not be the first time that I have hidden in the hay to overhear a soldier's tales or the stories that peasants tell among themselves. We must be careful to keep out of sight though, as these good folk turn shy and put on company manners as soon as they see a stranger."

"Eh! my dear sir," said Genestas, "have I not often pretended to be asleep so as to hear my troopers talking out on bivouac? My word, I once heard a droll yarn reeled off by an old quartermaster for some conscripts who were afraid of war; I never laughed so heartily in any theatre in Paris. He was telling them about the Retreat from Moscow, he told them that the army had nothing but the clothes they stood up in, that their wine was iced, that the dead stood stock-still in the road just where they were, that they had seen White Russia, and that they curry-combed the horses there with their teeth, that those who were fond of skating had fine times of it, and people who had a fancy for savory ices had as much as they could put away, that the women were generally poor company, but that the only thing they could really complain of was the want of hot water for shaving. In fact, he told them such a pack of absurdities, that even an old quartermaster who had lost his nose with a frostbite, so that they had dubbed him *Nezrestant,* was fain to laugh."

"Hush!" said Benassis, "here we are. I will go first; follow after me."

Both of them scaled the ladder and hid themselves in the hay, in a place from whence they could have a good view of the party below, who had not heard a sound overhead. Little groups of women were clustered about three or four candles. Some of them sewed, others were spinning, a good few of them were doing nothing, and sat with their heads strained foward, and their eyes fixed on an old peasant who was telling a story. The men were standing about for the most part, or lying at full length on the trusses of hay. Every group was absolutely silent. Their faces were barely visible by the flickering gleams of the candles by which the women were working, although each candle was surrounded by a glass globe filled

with water, in order to concenerate the light. The thick darkness and shadow that filled the roof and all the upper part of the barn seemed still further to diminish the light that fell here and there upon the workers' heads with such picturesque effects of light and shade. Here, it shone full upon the bright wondering eyes and brown forehead of a little peasant maiden; and there the straggling beams brought out the outlines of the rugged brows of some of the older men, throwing up their figures in sharp relief against the dark background, and giving a fantastic appearance to their worn and weather-stained garb. The attentive attitude of all these people and the expression on all their faces showed that they had given themselves up entirely to the pleasure of listening, and that the narrator's sway was absolute. It was a curious scene. The immense influence that poetry exerts over every mind was plainly to be seen. For is not the peasant who demands that the tale of wonder should be simple, and that the impossible should be well-nigh credible, a lover of poetry of the purest kind?

"She did not like the look of the house at all," the peasant was saying as the two newcomers took their places where they could overhear him; "but the poor little hunchback was so tired out with carrying her bundle of hemp to market, that she went in; besides, the night had come, and she could go no further. She only asked to be allowed to sleep there, and ate nothing but a crust of bread that she took from her wallet And inasmuch as the woman who kept house for the brigands knew nothing about what they had planned to do that night, she let the old woman into the house, and sent her upstairs without a light. Our hunchback throws herself down on a rickety truckle bed, says her prayers, thinks about her hemp, and is dropping off to sleep. But before she is fairly asleep, she hears a noise, and in walk two men carrying a lantern, and each man had a knife in his hand. Then fear came upon her; for in those times, look you, they used to make *pâtés* of human flesh for the seigneurs, who were very fond of them. But the old woman plucked up heart again, for she was so thoroughly shriveled and wrinkled that she thought they would think her a poorish sort of diet. The two men went past the hunchback and walked up to a bed that there was in the great room, and in which they had put the gentleman with the big portmanteau, the one that passed for a *negromancer*. The taller man holds up the lantern and takes the gentleman by the feet, and the short one, that had pretended to be drunk, clutches hold of his head and cuts his throat, clean, with one stroke, swish! Then they leave the head and body lying in its own blood up there, steal the portmanteau, and go downstairs with it. Here is our woman in a nice fix! First of all she thinks of slipping out, before anyone can suspect it, not knowing that Providence had brought her there to glorify God and to bring down punishment on the murderers. She was in a great fright, and when one is frightened one thinks of nothing else. But the woman of the house had asked the two brigands about the hunchback, and that had alarmed them. So back they come, creeping softly up the wooden staircase. The

poor hunchback curls up in a ball with fright, and she hears them talking about her in whispers.

" 'Kill her, I tell you.'

" 'No need to kill her.'

" 'Kill her!'

" 'No!'

"Then they come in. The woman, who was no fool, shuts her eyes and pretends to be asleep. She sets to work to sleep like a child, with her hand on her heart, and takes to breathing like a cherub. The man opens the lantern and shines the light straight into the eyes of the sleeping old woman—she does not move an eyelash, she is in such a terror for her neck.

" 'She is sleeping like a log; you can see that quite well,' " so says the tall one.

" 'Old women are so cunning!' answers the short man. 'I will kill her. We shall feel easier in our minds. Besides, we will salt her down to feed the pigs.'

"The old woman hears all this talk, but does not stir.

" 'Oh! it is all right, she is asleep,' says the short ruffian, when he saw that the hunchback had not stirred.

"That is how the old woman saved her life. And she may be fairly called courageous; for it is a fact that there are not many girls here who could have breathed like cherubs while they heard that talk going on about the pigs. Well, the two brigands set to work to lift up the dead man; they wrap him around in the sheets and chuck him out into the little yard; and the old woman hears the pigs scampering up to eat him, and grunting, *Hon! hon!*

"So when morning comes," the narrator resumed after a pause, "the woman gets up and goes down, paying a couple of sous for her bed. She takes up her wallet, goes on just as if nothing had happened, asks for the news of the countryside, and gets away in peace. She wants to run. Running is quite out of the question, her legs fail her for fright; and lucky it was for her that she could not run, for this reason. She had barely gone half a quarter of a league before she sees one of the brigands coming after her, just out of craftiness to make quite sure that she had seen nothing. She guesses this, and sits herself down on a bowlder.

" 'What is the matter, good woman?' asks the short one, for it was the shorter one and the wickeder of the two who was dogging her.

" 'Oh! master,' says she, 'my wallet is so heavy, and I am so tired, that I badly want some good man to give me his arm' (sly thing, only listen to her!) 'if I am to get back to my poor home.'

"Thereupon the brigand offers to go along with her, and she accepts his offer. The fellow takes hold of her arm to see if she is afraid. Not she! She does not tremble a bit, and walks quietly along. So there they are, chatting away as nicely as possible, all about farming, and the way to grow hemp, till they come to the outskirts of the town, where the hunchback lived, and the brigand made off for fear of meeting some of the sheriff's people. The woman reached her house at midday, and waited there till her husband came home; she thought and thought over all that had happened on her journey and during the night. The hemp-grower came home in the evening. He was

hungry; something must be got ready for him to eat. So while she greases her frying-pan, and gets ready to fry something for him, she tells him how she sold her hemp, and gabbles away as females do, but not a word does she say about the pigs, nor about the gentleman who was murdered and robbed and eaten. She holds her frying-pan in the flames so as to clean it, draws it out again to give it a wipe, and finds it full of blood.

"'What have you been putting into it?' says she to her man.

"'Nothing,' says he.

"She thinks it must have been a nonsensical piece of woman's fancy, and puts her frying-pan into the fire again. . . . *Pouf!* A head comes tumbling down the chimney!

"'Oh! look! It is nothing more nor less than the dead man's head,' says the old woman. 'How he stares at me! What does he want!'

"'*You must avenge me!*' says a voice.

"'What an idiot you are!' said the hemp-grower. 'Always seeing something or other that has no sort of sense about it! Just you all over.'

"He takes up the head, which snaps at his finger, and pitches it out into the yard.

"'Get on with my omelette,' he says, 'and do not bother yourself about that. 'Tis a cat.'

"'A cat!' says she; 'it was as round as a ball.'

"She puts back her frying-pan on the fire. . . . *Pouf!* Down comes a leg this time, and they go through the whole story again. The man was no more astonished at the foot than he had been at the head; he snatched up the leg and threw it out at the door. Before they had finished, the other leg, both arms, the body, the whole murdered traveler, in fact, came down piecemeal. No omelette all this time! The old hempseller grew very angry indeed.

"'By my salvation!' said he, 'when once my omelette is made we will see about satisfying that man yonder.'

"'So you admit, now, that it was a man?' said the hunchback wife. 'What made you say it was not a head a minute ago, you great worry?'

"The woman breaks the eggs, fries the omelette, and dishes it up without any more grumbling; somehow this squabble began to make her feel very uncomfortable. Her husband sits down and begins to eat. The hunchback was frightened, and said that she was not hungry.

"'Tap! tap!' There was a stranger rapping at the door.

"'Who is there?'

"'The man that died yesterday!'

"'Come in,' answers the hemp-grower.

"So the traveler comes in, sits himself down on a three-legged stool, and says: 'Are you mindful of God, who gives eternal peace to those who confess His Name? Woman! You saw me done to death, and you have said nothing! I have been eaten by the pigs! The pigs do not enter Paradise, and therefore I, a Christian man, shall go down into hell, all because a woman forsooth will not speak, a thing that has never been known before. You must deliver me,' and so on, and so on.

"The woman, who was more and more

frightened every minute, cleaned her frying-pan, put on her Sunday clothes, went to the justice, and told him about the crime, which was brought to light, and the robbers were broken on the wheel in proper style on the Market Place. This good work accomplished, the woman and her husband always had the finest hemp you ever set eyes on. Then, which pleased them still better, they had something that they had wished for for a long time, to wit, a man child, who in course of time became a great lord of the king's.

"That is the true story of *The Courageous Hunchback Woman.*"

Cartouche

BREATHES there the student of French annals of the past century that would not blush crimson in confessing that he had never heard of Cartouche?

What Cæsar was among warriors, such was the great, the unequalled Cartouche among the most illustrious miscreants whose names have come down to us invested with that slightly lurid halo belonging to superb guilt, and also with a considerable amount of factitious lustre that never was theirs at all. There is, it would appear, something in the character of distinguished men of this class which dazzles and bewilders, inducing every successive biographer to add some bright but unauthentic touch, until at length nothing is left of the great original save an indistinct outline and a name.

Such a portrait was presented to the public some twenty years ago in the three volumes entitled "L'Histoire de la Vie et du Procès de Cartouche," wherein the hero is represented as an accomplished gentleman of the bandit tribe—half belonging to melodrama, half to opera-comique, rich in costume, curious in arms, swelling with high and generous sentiments, but with false ideas of honour, and maddened with ambition to achieve, at whatever cost, renown.

He was, in reality, nothing of the kind.

The true Cartouche was, in fact, one of the most remarkable types presented by the Parisian lower world at the beginning of the last century. His existence, which would at any other period have been an impossibility, is now a fact of history, perhaps about as well worth studying as those immortalities of more exalted French circles, so complacently read of in these latter days by those who have the fortune to inhale a purer moral atmosphere.

The circumstance that such a man, established with his band in the very heart of Paris, creating, so to speak, a state within a state, and, not by a stroke of genius but the mere force of circumstances, laying under contribution high and low by means of a force better or-

ganized for attack than that which society commanded for defence—such a fact is not only in itself noteworthy, but it tends to the explanation of other points in history not easy to comprehend.

It is this which has imparted to the name of the French Macheath its lasting popularity. More than one distinguished robber, even of his own time, surpassed Cartouche in originality, in audacity, or in intelligence—Mandrin, for example; but the universal renown of Cartouche is centered permanently in the theatre of his deeds—his immortal name remains indissolubly associated with that of the queenly capital of France.

And whence shall we draw sound materials for a brief biography of this great thief?

Delessarts, in his "Procès Célèbres," has sketched some certain adventures of this hero of the gallows, but owns, with his usual candour, that they savour somewhat too strongly of romance.

St. Edme, with less honesty, copies legend after legend, ending with selections from that very untrustworthy book, "L'Histoire de la Bastille."

Similar fictions are retailed in the two great judiciary journals, and also in an article by M. Horace Raisson in the *Gazette des Tribunaux.*

The only authentic sources available to us are the parliamentary registers, and four scrolls, deposited with the archives, containing the interrogatories, confrontations and *procès-verbaux* of the execution of several hundred malefactors between the years 1721 and 1725.

Here we discover the first part of the process against Cartouche. But alas! we must not exult too greatly. In all the 734 cases, one only is devoted to Cartouche himself. In the others, his name is either omitted, or appears mixed up indirectly with robbers of the most desperate class. There is nothing, we say with sorrow, in this large mass of evidence, &c., which reveals to us Cartouche the organizer, the soul and spirit of crime, the unclassed Cæsar—let us say, the impetuous Alexander of the streets.

Poets are not to be taken "au pied de la lettre," else might we quote Ragot de Grandval (father of a celebrated actor of that name), who somewhat misused his unquestioned gift in the concoction of "Le Vice puni," or "Cartouche," curiously illustrated by Bonnart, commencing—

"Je chante les combats, et ce fameux voleur,
Qui, par sa vigilance et sa rare valeur,
Fit trembler tout Paris," &c., &c.

A little work by a Jesuit father, Patouillet, styled "Apologie de Cartouche," or "Le Scélérat sans reproche," appears to have been little more than the groundwork for a theological controversy.

Such are the scanty materials with which to construct our biography; and yet they may suffice, the legal records supplying the naked, brutal facts, Barbier and the gazettes the reports and tone of feeling of the day, Grandval and Le Grand tradition, manners, and costume.

It is beyond doubt that Cartouche was born at Paris in October, 1693, and was named Louis Dominique. His birthplace was on the confines of that thickly-populated, essentially Parisian quarter, La Courtille, which comprised that portion of the town lying between

the Poissonnière gate and the front of the Bastile.

According to the best authorities, Cartouche *père* was a respectable wine-seller, who had amassed by steady industry a very handsome fortune. Anxious to provide for his son a higher position in the social scale, he sent him early to the college of Clermont, where, in all probability, he found a fellow-pupil in Voltaire. At this establishment, tradition states the young hero displayed those dawnings of genius in the pilfering line, destined to ripen into the perfection of theft in its highest aspects.

It was hardly to be expected that a mind of such a stamp would long submit itself to the restraints of discipline and study, and accordingly we next light upon him in the company of a band of gipsies; who, charmed with his monkey-like agility and mischievous pranks, adopted him a child of the gang, and indoctrinated him in many little matters which proved to him of essential service in his subsequent career.

His gipsy friends formed the most sanguine anticipations as to his future; and well they might. The boy was a real prodigy. Bold and crafty, inventive, nimble as an ape, pliant as an acrobat; with an unconquerable love of wandering, of pleasure, and of idleness, together with a remarkable ability to endure, when necessary, privation and fatigue. Such were some of the qualities that met in this celebrated man.

His residence with these excellent people might have lasted about three years, when one fine day the parliament of Rouen issued an abrupt decree, commanding all gipsies to quit the province immediately—or sooner.

The Bohemian band obeyed with the usual alacrity. But in their haste, Cartouche, who for the moment was lying ill in a neighbouring hut, was left behind; and on his recovery found himself alone and friendless in the streets of Rouen, without a red cent in his pocket.

As if Providence decreed him one chance more, who should fall in with him than a well-to-do and warm-hearted uncle, who not only regarnished both his stomach and his pocket, but replaced him safely in the paternal home, where, if no fatted calf celebrated his reappearance, he was at least received with indulgence, and his sins—by this time not a few—remitted.

Many a comparatively trifling snare may be the cause of man's final fall. Monotony slew Cartouche. So long as the complete novelty of a calm and regular life retained its charm, all went well; but when the rising at five, the thick soup at breakfast, always smoking at the same hour on the same table—the same duties—the same talk—began to pale, then Cartouche remembered with regretful sighs his "august abodes" in tent and hedge, and fretted, like the caged eagle, to be free.

To do him justice, he struggled for a while with this desire; and even sought solace in the education of his brothers and sisters—that is to say, in the language and useful arts he had acquired among his gipsy friends. Under his able tuition the young people became proficients in slang, and the words *cagou,* solitary thief; *coësre,* master beggar; *coquillard,* thief in pilgrim's dress; *courteau de boutanche,* servant who hires himself with the purpose of robbery; *détacheur de bouchon,* cutpurse; *franc mitou,* shammer of sickness;

bubin, curious variety of the last-named, showing fictitious bites of a savage dog, and alarming into charity people who dare not drive him away; *narquois,* mendicant soldier; *polisson,* vagabond so scantily clad as to excite disgust and pity; and finally, *orphelin,* antithesis of "cagou," or gregarious robber. These and many such phrases frequently struck surprise and some half-defined uneasiness into the souls of the Cartouches *père et mère.*

From meditating on his lost liberty to making efforts to regain it, was a short step for our young hero. Circumstances precipitated this. He had formed a connexion with a young laundress of the neighbourhood, to whom, in the gushing fondness of his heart, he offered such rich repasts at the first restaurateur's of La Courtille, that his father, made aware of these luxurious doings, followed and detected him—ascertaining, moreover, enough of his general habits to be certain that he was already fairly launched in a career of unblushing crime.

Without an hour's delay, the father proceeded straight to that "providence of families," the lieutenant-general of police, from whom he readily obtained an order for the transmission of his son to the House of Correction at St. Lazare.

It was too late. The young gentleman had disappeared, marching off with arms and baggage, and (no doubt in absence of mind) his father's money-box!

A brief period was now spent in general practice at church, or in crowded assemblies where money promised to be plentiful; and Cartouche had little left to learn in the walk he had chosen, when a singular incident occurred.

He had been attending a charity sermon, the results of which had certainly been more profitable to his individual self than to the object proposed, when he was suddenly collared, and a determined voice demanded "his money or his life!"

Cartouche preferred to retain both, and made such effectual resistance that his assailant gave back.

"Gently, gently, my young gamechick!" said the latter, with a burst of coarse laughter. "Not so hot. You have beak and claws, and that's just what I like. Shake hands, my lad!"

Cartouche still remained on the defensive.

"Come, come!" resumed the other, impatiently; "be easy, man! *Que diable!* People of *our* sort ought to understand each other at a glance. Hark ye—I was in the church too; but instead of working for myself, I watched *you! Peste!*—what a hand!—what quickness of eye!—what softness of execution! Tears came into my eyes as I followed your supple movements, and the success that attended them. Here—take this" (giving him a red silk purse stuffed with gold), "that's only a bit of my morning's work. I'd ask you to drink with me, but something better invites us. Come back to the Jacobins. A rich old German is hanging about the confessional, awaiting his turn. Now you shall see, *mon jeune coq,* whether or no I am worthy to work at your side."

Two minutes later the German's purse was transferred to the pocket of the speaker.

M. Gaguis—such was this gentleman's

favourite name—inhabited a sordid den in an alley of the *Tripot-de-Bertault*, whose close and stuffy atmosphere and poverty-stricken aspect were in some measure redeemed by the presence of two charming young ladies—Fanchon and Michon—of whom the former was the wife (waiving the ceremony) of M. Gaguis; the latter her sister, waiting for an eligible opportunity to settle—like her elder.

Now, Cartouche was at this period about seventeen, and if not handsome, far from unpleasant in his exterior. Grandval sums him up in three lines as—

". . . à la fleur de son âge,
Brun, sec, maigre, petit, mais grand pour le courage;
Entreprenant, hardi, robuste, alerte, adroit."

Introduced to the ladies by his admiring friend, he received from Fanchon a motherly kiss, from Michon a coquettish glance, from the effects of which the visitor had hardly recovered when he was invited to partake of the banquet—rabbit in onions—which had been prepared by the fair hands of the latter maiden.

An immense jug of Auxerre wine accompanied the viands, and there being but two glasses in store, Cartouche and Michon drank together, and found the Auxerre wine unusually palatable.

Dinner over and the jug emptied,

"*Ah-ça*, my young comrade," remarked Gaguis, "you see how we rub on—never melancholy—never idle! What do you think of domestic life? Hang solitude! You know the proverb:—

'Quand les bœufs vont deux à deux—
Le labourage n'en va que mieux.'

('When the beasts plough two and two—
Labour's the lighter, and sooner through.')

I had a partner lately, but owing to some words with *la pousse* (the peace-officers) he has been offered a lodging at the expense of *Mons. le comte de la carrache* (the gaoler). I offer you his place."

"*Tope*" (agreed), said Cartouche, glancing at Michon. And the bargain was made.

The marriage (morganatic) of the younger pair was celebrated on the spot, at, so to speak, the altar of nature, and with the simple ceremonial of the introduction of a fresh jug of wine, in which the *partie carrèe* drank success to the united household.

The little family circle thus decorously arranged, the gentlemen went steadily to work, and, as may be conjectured, considerable profits accrued from their combined energies. But alas! the most sunny life has its occasional clouds.

The Cartouche honeymoon had not waned when Fanchon—the staid and matronly Fanchon—began to betray so pronounced a partiality for her new connexion as to excite the ire and jealousy of her true proprietor. A general row ensued. The two gentlemen henceforth worked on separate beats; and this circumstance—indirectly, indeed—contributed to the complete disruption of their heretofore happy home.

Gaguis, troubled by these domestic broils, and doing his work, as it were, mechanically, and without due caution, was seen by the police in the act of stripping a citizen of his laced cloak. Chase was given, and our friend, by skilful doubles, had all but shaken off

his pursuers. But one quick eye had detected him darting into the alley of refuge. The house was searched. M. Gaguis was apprehended, and transmitted to Marseilles, while the ladies were lodged in safe custody elsewhere. Cartouche, who was absent, returned, to find the whole of his adopted family in the law's paternal embrace.

Our hero was not a man to succumb entirely to such a blow. Work—sheer, uncompromising work—was his panacea. But change, even in this, was needful to him. He took to dice and cards. Haunting the better hells, he used the skill acquired among the gipsies to such purpose that suspicions were awakened, and, at length, M. Cartouche, detected in the act, was kicked into the street, and debarred for ever from *that* branch of industry.

Tradition affirms that his next *dèbut* was in the character of a police spy. This, however, is apocryphal, and it is possible to malign even such a man as he. It is certain that he very quickly appeared as a recruiting-sergeant; and that he had acquired ideas of discipline and subordination is manifest, as will be shown by his manner of dealing with the skilled and desperate band we find somewhat later rallied round their accomplished general in Paris. Nay, it was his aim to impart to this force an organization and system approximating as closely as possible to the military, appointing lieutenants, sub-lieutenants, sergeants, watch, rallying and passwords, &c. &c.

This completed, the campaign opened with night skirmishing. Thus, some three or four of the band would pounce upon an unwary citizen, whom a blow on the head from a loaded bludgeon reduced to temporary silence. When the victim regained sufficient consciousness to give an alarm, the troop was at safe distance, arranging the next affair.

Le Grand has given a dramatic picture of the scene that wound up the night's depredations, from which, however, it is evident he has eliminated much that is revolting to feeling and taste. His report establishes the sometimes disputed fact that the bandit force divided the capital among them in regular districts:—

Car.—Now, gentlemen, what success to-night? Who had charge of the Pont Neuf?

La Ramèe.—My captain, it was the wide-awake one, assisted by Merciless and your humble slave.

Car.—The proceeds?

La R.—Four rapiers; two gold-knobbed canes.

Car.—Have I not told you I don't care about silver swords? What rubbish is this! I have half a mind to make you return them.

La R.—The hilts are good, and they cost us nothing.

Car.—Well, well—*passons*. Who was on duty at St. Denis?

Harpin.—No-quarter, l'Estoccade, and I.

Car.—What have you *pincè* (grabbed)?

Harp.—Some linen and muslin.

Car.—Humph! Poor coarse stuff! Well, who transacted business in the Rue des Noyers?

Bel-Humeur—La Fantaisie, Fond-et-Cale, and I.

Car.—What have you picked up?

Bel Hu.—A couple of marquises, who had supped at Cheret's.

Car.—And got——?

Bel-Hu.—Their coats, swords, and hats.

Car.—Nothing else? Do you mean to say they had not watches?

Bel-Hu.—Certainly; but they had been treating some lorettes.

Car.—I see. To-morrow, you will rob these damsels. No poaching on my manors. Who was on guard in the Rue Fromenteau?

La Pince.—The Earless, Debrideux, and I.

Car.—Whom did you fall in with?

La Pince—An abbè in a scarlet cloak.

Car.—Any cash?

La P.—Not a sou. He had in his pocket only a fan and a patch-box.

Car.—The guard at the Faubourg St. Germain?

La Branche.—Burn-Beard, Crackjaw, and I.

Car.—Profit?

La B.—We can't tell yet. A Gascon gave us a world of trouble. And after all, the rascal had not a sou in his purse! There was a pocket-book, indeed; but that contained only genealogies, assignations and tailor's bills. Fact, mon capitaine. Believe me, we are men of honour.

Car.—I begin to doubt it, I promise you! Come, come, gentlemen, rob, pillage, swindle whomsoever you please; but, hang it! no nonsense among ourselves.

That age, the period of Cartouche, was the age of nicknames. Not only in criminal circles, but in the lower military grades, was the fashion largely adopted. Scarcely a sergeant or corporal but had his supplementary appellation, and "Brin-d'amour," "Bras-de-fer," "Va-de-Bon-Cœur," "La Douceur," "Chasselard," "La Rose," &c. &c., were plentiful as blackberries.

Become aware of the existence of an organized system of crime, Paris, alarmed, appealed to its natural protector, M. Argenson, head of the police, but found little consolation.

Police there were in rank abundance —*i. e.*, archers (horse and foot); exempts, forty-eight commissaries (as many as at present), and spies and agents by hundreds. But there was no controlling power, order, or system. Each worked for himself. They plundered the robber and the robbed alike. Of ten agents engaged in a common pursuit, perhaps but three obeyed the same superior. They were selected without reference to their antecedents, many having served in the galleys, and many more bearing the convict's brand on their shoulder. Miserably paid, they were perpetually exposed to the temptation of a bribe, until at length the sheepdog had become almost as dangerous to the flock as the wolf himself.

We have omitted to mention an important portion of the robber force, without whose aid many a brilliant exploit would have fallen flat; many a well-conceived project failed utterly in the execution—the ladies. The records glow and glisten with the well-known names of "La Catin," "La Bel-Air," "La Galette," "La Petite Poulaillière," "La Mion," "La Belle-Laitière," "Margot-Monsieur," "La Religieuse," "La Bonne," "La Blanche," "Tape-dru," &c., &c. But far beyond them all stands out, in rich relief, the name of that most celebrated, most accomplished, most devoted of all the (titular) wives of Cartouche—Big Jenny!

This remarkable woman was not de-

scended from the highest stock. Her sire was believed to be an ostler, and it was probably owing in some degree to the associations of childhood that Big Jenny's first little misunderstanding with the laws arose from her connexion with a horse-stealing case, the result of which was that the young lady, whipped and branded, was exiled from Paris for the term of ten years. Jane, however, broke her *ban,* returned to her beloved city, and is found in 1720 ostensibly engaged in the peaceful profession of a fruiterer, but in reality flitting about from place to place, spying, plotting, drinking, fighting, robbing, and being robbed—the terror and admiration (according to the spectator's point of view) of every one that approached her.

It is with reluctance that, as faithful historians, we have to acknowledge the existence of a second (contemporaneous) wife in "La Nèron," who was parted with to M. Cartouche by her affectionate aunt, La Tanton, for the moderate consideration of a dinner at the cabaret Du Petit-Seau.

Let us glance for an instant at one of the excellent institutions at which, thanks to the administrative skill and energy of M. Cartouche, some of the most finished thieves of the time received the education they turned to such excellent account.

It is the largest of several huge caves sunk in the chalky sides of Montmartre, and lit by large iron sconces. From the centre of an arch spanning a deep recess, hangs by the neck the figure of a man. He is richly dressed; a laced hat is still clutched in his hand. By his side is a gold-hilted rapier, in his pockets a diamond snuff-box, a pocket-book, and a purse of gold. Within his portly person are bundles of hay. It is the *mannequin des êpreuves*—the little Test-man.

To various points of this gentleman's person and attire are attached numerous little rattles and bells. To strip him without an alarm from these of every valuable disposed about him is the task to which the gang, crouched about him in various easy attitudes, one by one address themselves, each candidate as he fails being driven off by his fellows under a shower of playful, but by no means contemptible, buffets.

One alone succeeds. It is the master himself, the incomparable Cartouche, and tears come into the eyes of the admiring band as they watch the indolent ease with which those unrivalled fingers gradually, but surely, reduce the pendant beau literally to a "man of straw."

It was in 1720 that the terror inspired by the Cartouchian band, and the laxity of the police, reached its climax. They held virtual possession of the capital, especially by night. And their depredations were conducted with the military order and precision so much inculcated by their great leader.

A party would assemble quietly before some rich mansion. Then some huge fellow—very frequently, one Simon Once, a gigantic ex-porter—would offer his mighty shoulders as the base of a living pyramid which, formed of the lighter and more agile members of the gang, speedily reached to the lower windows. Some panes were adroitly removed, the apartments entered, and the most attractive objects began to glide down a chain of ready hands, till the pillage was complete.

It was thus that, in September, 1720,

the band invaded the residence of the Spanish ambassador, Rue de Tournon, and nearly stripped the chamber of the ambassadress, seizing a magnificent pearl necklace, a brooch with twenty-seven large diamonds, a rich table-service, and the entire wardrobe of the lady.

About this period the South Sea bubble had introduced Law to the Paris public, and enormous profits resulted from the pressure and tumult among the high-born mob who daily besieged the offices of the great financier. On one occasion a certain Lord Dermott is recorded to have lost shares to the value of 1,300,000—*now* nearly equal to 12,000,000—livres!

It was, however, only at the beginning of 1721 that the dreaded name of Cartouche became familiar to the Parisians. "This Cartouche, the robber of whom I have before spoken," writes Barbier, "is not yet taken." He certainly was *not.*

The exploits of the gang at this time read like a battle-page from Homer.

"Va-de-Bon-Cœur" stole in the Palais-Royal two silver flambeaux, enamelled with the Regent's arms.

At the Louvre, Louison (Cartouche's brother) possessed himself of the sword and mantle of the Prince Soubise.

The buckles and silver-hilted swords disappeared like magic, and the Regent himself was robbed, on leaving the Opera. But here the laugh was on the other side, the Regent, purposely to deceive the robbers, having caused his hilt to be richly chased—in steel!

The note-book of the receiver, Tanton, showed among other things, "Three large flagons of silver, from the palace."

It was only when the very highest society began to feel the inconvenience of such a state of things that the Government set themselves seriously to the task of reform. A notorious murder in 1721 determined the Regent once for all to exterminate the banditti of the capital. This was, perhaps, the more necessary, since the Regent himself, a man of many vices, and well described by Louis XIV. as *"le fanfaron de crimes,"* had been suspected by the Paris public to be in league with the robber band!

It so happened that a worthless scribbler of the day, dubbed "poet," and forced into notice by Racine, had published a series of rhymed philippics, in which the Regent was branded with every conceivable crime, murder and incest included. As in the composition of these unworthy diatribes the author had displayed an amount of talent he had never brought to bear on anything else, the work obtained a wide circulation, and quickly reached the eye of the Regent himself.

That royal gentleman did not, it was reported, even knit his brows at the imputation of murder—murder, that is, of any ordinary type. At the history of his unbridled debaucheries he laughed with a cynical enjoyment. But when, as he proceeded, he found himself depicted as the rival of Voisin and Brinvilliers, concocting at the laboratory of the chemist Homborg, slow-acting poisons destined for the Dauphin, the Duke of Burgundy, and all who stood between the "round and top of sovereignty," and himself—*then*, it is said, a tear of honest rage and shame gushed from his eye little accustomed to such a visitor; he flung the book away, and vowed that the slanderer De la Grange-Chancel should feel his vengeance.

Nothing would have been easier than to cause the wretched rhymester to be put to death in some secret dungeon of the Bastile; but, strange to say, the furious prince so far controlled his wounded feelings on *this* occasion as to merely send him prisoner to the Isle Ste. Marguerite. Even from this penalty a poem, couched in a tone of humble laudation, sufficed to set him free. He fled to Holland, and at that safe distance recommenced the work of calumny.

Paris was still discussing these slanders, when one May morning, 1721, some labourers came upon the body of a man recently murdered. It proved to be that of another obscure poet, one Vergier; but so little were these men known to any but their own immediate companions, that for a time the corpse was believed to be that of De la Grange-Chancel.

"Kill a poet!" shouted the public. *"Why?* Not to rob, surely. These sort of folks are not robbable! It must have been an act of vengeance. And *whose* vengeance? The Regent's, of course!"

And now about the assassins. Cartouchians, you may be sure. These fellows are all in the Regent's pay. The rumour and the reasoning spread like wildfire.

Cartouche was loudly demanded of the authorities, but the request was more easily made than complied with. One of his most illustrious followers, however, was forthcoming, and the arrest of this man, Jean Rozy, *alias* the Chevalier, *alias* the Cracksman, was sufficiently curious to be worth giving in detail.

The banditti of Paris at this time were divided into cliques, or associations, between which, notwithstanding that they frequently acted in concert, there existed considerable jealousy. A province, for example, would send to the capital from time to time gangs of smugglers, highwaymen—men superior in strength and daring even to the highest class of Parisian robbers—being, in fact, the very aristocracy of crime. These rural practitioners were so numerous as in some districts to approach the dimensions of a veritable army. Barbier writes that in 1718 a force of nearly five thousand, chiefly smugglers of salt, held possession of the country round Paris, under the command of two retired officers—Colingry and Rasoir. So well were these levies organized and disciplined, that the Cardinal Alberoni is said to have regarded them in the light of regular troops when calculating the military resources of France.

Some days after the murder of Vergier, one of these provincial gentlemen, Dubourquet, *alias* the Notary, happened to be strolling in the Tuileries, and was recognised by two Cartouchians—the Cracksman and one Duplessis—who, hungry and with empty pockets, were lurking for prey. Now, Mons. Dubourquet was richly attired, wore a silver-hilted rapier, and regaled his nose from time to time with snuff from a box of the same rich material. This aspect of luxury stirred the bile of the famishing professors. They resolved on the plunder of their provincial brother.

Meeting him at the gate, they denounced him as a spy of the police, employed to watch themselves. Dubourquet, afraid of a disturbance in so

public a place, spoke them fair, but was only suffered to escape on the forfeiture of his sword, purse, and snuff-box.

Mad for revenge, Dubourquet went straight to the authorities, and under the name of Sarost, a retired officer, informed against the Cracksman and his companion. The former was arrested. But Captain Sarost had gained his end, and never appeared to substantiate his complaint.

A second murder now occurred to redouble the public agitation. Cartouche himself with certain of his band were carousing at a cabaret, and listening to the performance of a strolling fiddler. The latter, having received a few sous, was departing, when he was pushed roughly back by a member of the gang, and ordered to continue. Some workmen at a neighbouring table, incensed at this tyranny, took part with the assaulted man. A row ensued. Swords and pistols were freely used. The police rushed in, and one of these, Mondelot, fell dead from a shot fired, it was declared, by a female Cartouchian named Manon-le-Roy. It is at least certain that this distinguished lady always carried arms, and equally so that when some time afterwards she was arrested, in company with two more amiable persons, Mesdames Chauvelot and Madeleine Beaulieu, she entrenched herself behind her bed, and for half an hour kept the whole body of "exempts" at bay.

The murders of Vergier and Mondelot brought the name of Cartouche prominently before the public. Henceforward, every audacious crime went forth stamped as it were with his name and authority. Some attempts were made to entrap the formidable thief, and one police-agent held him in such hot pursuit, that Cartouche resolved to give him a lesson.

One evening, on an occasion of a public fête, when a large body of archers and police were assembled in the Rue de Tournon, Cartouche was aware of his enemy stealthily following, and evidently waiting only a favourable moment to raise the hue-and-cry. Suddenly the chief wheels round, seizes him by the throat, and, having thus stopped his utterance, beats the poor wretch almost into a jelly with his cane; then flinging him back among the advancing archers, darts down an alley, changes coat and wig, and quietly reappears in the very midst of those who were eagerly hunting him.

The gallantries of Cartouche would occasionally betray him into an awkward predicament. Married as he was in a certain fashion to Big Jenny, that lady was not without rivals, of whom, however, the amiable lady took but little heed. We have already mentioned La Néron. To her succeeded the fair flower-maiden, Manon-le-Roy, who, whipped, branded, and placed in the House of Correction, left the field open for Marie-Jeanne Bonnefoi, a pretty lemonade-seller, known as the Little Grey Sister, or Margot the Nun, so called from her demure aspect and modest attire.

One evening in August, 1720, the police were alarmed by a tumult that declared itself at the humble dwelling of the little nun. On effecting an entrance, they found a little man, half drunk, shouting, dancing, breaking furniture, and discharging pistols right and left among an admiring audience of both sexes. The excited performer was forth-

with conducted to the guardhouse; but no complainant appeared against him, and after a while the little gentleman humbly represented that he was an honest chocolate-seller in the Rue Comédie-Français, Grisel by name, who had unfortunately drank a cup of wine beyond his usual modest allowance.

"Allons!" remarked a good-natured sergeant, "you have done nothing for which one would whip a cat. Be off about your business, but leave something with us in case we want you."

The little gentleman deposited 100 livres and his snuff-box, which articles he was allowed to reclaim next day. It was Cartouche.

A fearful affair now occurred. A woman of the gang, called La Blanche, one of their most approved spies and receivers, was murdered in her lodging by the male Cartouchian, Dautreques-Duplessis. What was to be done with the body? Duplessis confided his little difficulty to the chief. The two wretches conveyed the corpse to a garret, divided it into as many portions as time allowed, placed the latter in a huge scuttle obtained at a broker's and, marching through Paris in broad day, deposited their hideous burden in the Seine, Cartouche, pistol in hand, keeping curious observers at a distance till all was done. The wife of the miscreant Duplessis waited till dark; then placing the head of the murdered woman in her apron, carried that also to a place of concealment.

In December, 1720, Cartouche was fairly captured and confined in Fort l'Evêque; but spite of the terror inspired by this redoubtable robber, so slight were the precautions taken respecting him, that on the 2nd of March, 1721, he contrived to effect his escape. By this time it had become known that he was personally concerned in the affair of the murder of Mondelot, and the authorities roused themselves to unusual efforts for his recapture. Hereupon an odd incident occurred.

As the officer of the Criminal Court was uttering the usual proclamation, with sound of trumpet and "outcry," calling upon Cartouche to appear within eight days and answer to the charge of murder, and had come to the words, "In the King's name and those of nos seigneurs of the Parliament, we do command the person called 'Cartouche'——"

"Present, Cartouche!" shouted a voice in the centre of the crowd, that turned the whole body—archers, trumpeters, citizens and all—into a frenzy of rage and agitation. It was Cartouche himself, but he had vanished.

Two persons now entered into a solemn league and covenant to pursue the impalpable robber without rest or respite until he should be slain or taken. One of these was an exempt named Huron, a bold and clever officer. The other was the archer Pepin, a man of equal resolution.

The chase opened ill for our hero. Huron tracked him so hotly as actually to exchange pistol-shots with him, by which Cartouche was said to have been seriously wounded. It is certain that either to escape this persevering foe, or to recover from his alleged hurts, Cartouche disappeared for three entire months from criminal history. It is stated by Grandval that he paid a visit to England, and became personally known to his great British prototype, Jack Sheppard.

Another historian affirms that he journeyed in company with his lieutenant, Balagny, into Champagne, where, at a cottage belonging to the last-named illustrious person, he led an innocent and pastoral life until his complete restoration urged him once more to the field of fame.

The police, who exultingly assured the public that Cartouche had been driven from the capital, were soon painfully aware of his return. A very large reward was set upon his head, and a great body of exempts—Huron and Pepin among the foremost—devoted themselves almost exclusively to the pursuit.

The zeal of both these officers proved fatal to them. They had one evening tracked Cartouche to a notorious robber-haunt. Finding themselves likely to be surrounded, five of the robbers threw themselves at once upon Huron and his followers. The officer received several pistol-shots, and was then cut down by Cartouche himself.

A few days later, Cartouche, while taking a quiet stroll with Madeleine, perceived Pepin on his heels. Turning suddenly on their pursuer, Madeleine attacked him with large stones, while Cartouche ran the unfortunate archer through the body.

These misadventures almost daunted the police, while they renewed public anxiety to a painful degree. The name of Cartouche was in every mouth.

"No more compliments and chat *now,*" wrote Le Grand. "We merely say 'good morning,' and then add, 'What of Cartouche?—have they got him?' "

A regularly organized attempt was next made, under the direction of an aide-major of the Gardes Françaises—Pékom—who selected ninety of his most trusted and intrepid men, and sent them in various disguises, but well armed, in quest of the single robber chief.

The first result of this step was to awaken mistrust on the part of Cartouche and his companions. They saw themselves beset with disguised foes, and suspected every strange face that crossed their way. The Regent, moreover, issued a proclamation increasing the reward for the capture of Cartouche, promising pardon to any accomplice who should deliver him up, and severe punishment to any who gave him refuge.

At this critical period of our hero's fortunes occurred what was known as the affair of the hôtel Desmarets.

Nicolas Desmarets, nephew of the great Colbert, died on the 6th of May, at his hotel, Rue des Petits Augustins. This wealthy residence Cartouche resolved should be thoroughly pillaged.

A chosen band, commanded by the chief in person, forced an entrance, and were busily at work in the rich saloons and chambers, when one of their look-outs, "Ratichon," who usually dressed as an abbé, rushed in breathless, announcing the approach of an absolute army of archers, under the exempts Bourlon and Pannetier.

The danger-signal has hardly been given before the enemy appear. A fierce fight commences—from room to room, from stair to stair. The robbers fight stoutly; but some have fallen under the determined assault of an enemy whose numbers increase every moment. Ammunition fails. It is a *sauve qui peut.* Cartouche escapes by a chimney, gains the roof, and descends at some distance in the garret of a good-natured mechanic, to whom he represents himself

as a man pursued by his merciless creditors. His host sympathizes, provides him with a disguise, and once more the lion has escaped the toils.

That distrust existed in the brigand band at this time is demonstrated by a ghastly incident related by Barbier. A body, fearfully mutilated, was found behind the Chartreux. A card affixed to the breast bore this inscription:—

"Here lies Jean Labaty, who has met a well-deserved fate. Let those who are guilty of the like treason, expect the like punishment."

Barbier mistook "Labaty" for "Rebaté"—in slang language, assassinated—and the corpse was subsequently ascertained to have been that of one Jean Lefebvre, a Garde Française in league with the gang.

The murder of Lefebvre was followed by that of Tanton, a cousin of Cartouche, who, suspecting him of treachery, decoyed him to a retired spot, stabbed him to the heart, and buried him in a dung-heap.

But now, at length, the hour of retribution was at hand.

Gruthus Duchâtelet—next to Cartouche the most ferocious of these human tigers—acknowledged to himself that the game was nearly up. Plunged as he was in the deepest and deadliest crime, he saw that but one chance of safety remained to him. He must denounce his chief.

No sooner resolved than done. On the 13th of October the traitor called on Pékom, the aide-major of the Gardes Françaises, made his offer, obtained his conditions, and, to make all sure, procured the ratification of the latter, not only by the minister Le Blanc, but by the Regent himself.

On being satisfactorily arranged, Péhom sent for a brave veteran sergeant, Jean Courtades, and confided to him—attended by a picked band of archers—the dangerous duty on hand, directing him to follow the guidance of Duchâtelet; but on the least suspicious movement of the latter, to blow out his brains.

The party, consisting of forty men, marching at ten paces distance from each other, started at break of day. The place indicated by Duchâtelet was the cabaret "Du Pistolet," Rue de Menilmontant, kept by one Germain Savard.

"Is any one above?" asked the traitor guide.

"No," was the answer.

"Are the four women there?"

"Come up."

Leaving some men below to watch Savard, Courtades led his band upstairs. In the chamber they found the four chief bandits; Balagny and Limosin drinking by the fire, Gaillard in bed, and Cartouche, seated on a couch, in the act of drawing on his pantaloons. The surprise was complete, and but a few minutes elapsed before the four prisoners, securely bound, were on their way, in coaches, to the hotel of the Minister of War.

Barbier writes exultingly:—

"Great news in Paris!—Cartouche, the famous robber-chief, sought so long in vain that men began to doubt of his actual existence, is a prisoner! He was sold and delivered by an ex-soldier of the guard, one of the gang. This soldier deserves to be broken on the wheel as richly as any; but the fellow was cool enough. Cartouche had gone to bed at six this morning at a cabaret in

La Courtille, with six pistols ready to his hand. He was conducted to the Ministry of War, and from thence, on foot, to the Châtelet. He was insolent, as if despising his captors, declaring that they would not dare to execute him, and would not keep him long."

Cartouche had been taken *en chemise*. His captors refused to permit him even to finish dressing, and in this condition he was presented to the public whom he had held so long in abject terror. He, however, never lost his coolness. On alighting from the carriage, he was compelled to step down barefooted into the mud. An archer rudely pushed him forward. Cartouche dashed his mud-soiled foot into the man's face, exclaiming—

"*Imbecile!* You durst not have touched me yesterday for your life!"

The process advanced quickly. Duchâtelet, though he had been promised pardon, was kept under surveillance—it being intended to try and condemn him, though not to execute his sentence. Certain of reprieve, he confessed, without hesitation, certain burglaries in which Cartouche had personally taken part—not to mention the murder of Lefebvre, in which himself (Duchâtelet), Cartouche, Gaillard, Balagny, and Limosin had participated.

Notwithstanding these confessions, Cartouche continued to deny his identity, calling himself one Jean Bourguignon, a countryman. His celebrity seemed to call for an exceptional treatment. At all events, Barbier writes,—

"He is very well cared for. He has at dinner, soup, a good bouilli, with a little entrée, and three flasks of wine. He receives crowds of distinguished visitors, and the gaolers make a good thing of it. Fashionable ladies attend his levees. The Regent's mistress, Mdme. de Parabère, came in disguise, among others, to visit the hero of the day."

But the most distinguished of his visitors was the Maréchale de Boufflers, the widow of the hero who so gloriously lost the battle of Malplaquet.

It was not their first interview.

One warm summer night in July, 1721, just as the lady had retired to bed, leaving her window a little open for air, roused by a slight noise, she drew the curtain aside, and, to her horror, saw a man's face close to her own. She made a snatch at the bell, but two quick hands closed her lips and imprisoned her hands.

"No noise, madame!" said the visitor; "I am Louis Dominique Cartouche. I need say no more."

After a moment's pause, the robber resumed:—

"The street is guarded. They are on my traces, but no one saw me climb your balcony. I am safe if you keep quiet. If you will *not*—" He opened his blouse and displayed a rich but faded costume, with a complete armoury of silver-mounted pistols and knives. "But escape is not all I seek," continued her visitor. "I have not been in bed for a week. I am tired out, and hungry. You must provide me supper and a bed!"

The Maréchale gave a start and shudder.

"Compose yourself, madame," said Cartouche; "the devil is not so black as he is painted. I know how to behave to a lady. *Any* couch will serve for my bed. As for supper, a chicken, some fruit, and a bottle of champagne, is all I require. Ring for your maids;

pretend a *fringale* (sudden hunger); and when I have supped and slept I will make my bow."

The lady tremblingly obeyed; her visitor, ensconced behind the curtains, watching her every gesture. The repast was quickly served, and the maids withdrew, much marvelling at their mistress's sudden appetite.

In a few minutes Cartouche had left nothing but some bones and peel, and an empty bottle.

"Now, madame," he said, rising, "I will wish you good-night. I retire to the sofa in your dressing-room. Please to forget that I am so near a neighbour, for Cartouche, as you may be aware, sleeps only with one eye!"

At three o'clock the robber rose, much refreshed, offered polite acknowledgments, and retired as he had come.

The Maréchale sprang from her bed, closed the window, and alarmed her household. Search was made among the valuables, but not an article had been removed; even the costly silver used for the supper had been respected by the eccentric thief.

Some days later, Mdme. de Boufflers received a basket of excellent champagne. To be sure, the acknowledgment cost Cartouche but little. The wine had been abstracted from the vaults of the most popular dealer in Paris.

Hearing of his capture, the lady could not resist the inclination to visit her scrupulous visitor. Cartouche received her with great politeness, only regretting that circumstances at the moment forbade his offering a return of her hospitality. The Maréchale presented him with two louis.

It was hardly to be expected that such a man would calmly acquiesce in the decree of fate which seemed to have consigned him to a hopeless imprisonment, from which the only outlet was to the scaffold.

Cartouche only awaited his opportunity. It came sooner than he had expected.

He had been placed in one of the horrible subterranean dungeons destroyed in 1780 by the humane command of Louis the Sixteenth. He had a companion in trouble who had formerly worked as a stonemason. This man, having, unlike Cartouche, his arms and legs unfettered, had ascertained the existence of a ditch, or fosse, under their floor, connected with the sewerage of the prison. With his nails, and sometimes a limb of his companion's chair, he effected an entrance into this ditch, and from thence through a wall into another leading from the cellar of a neighbouring house. A breach effected in another wall, the adventurers found themselves safe in the cellar of an honest fruiterer. A short staircase led up into the shop; and now, as Barbier naïvely remarks, their escape would have been completed if, *par malheur*, it had not failed.

The shop-door was simply bolted within, but before the robbers could discover the latch, a slight noise made by Cartouche's fetters aroused a dog till then asleep under the counter. An alarm followed. Down rushed a maid-servant, screaming "Thieves! thieves!" followed by the master of the house bearing a lamp, which Cartouche at once struck down. Even now they had nearly escaped, for the bolt was found and the door flung open. But, unluckily, a patrol of four archers was passing at

the critical moment. Seeing Cartouche in fetters, they forthwith arrested the pair, and reconducted them to the prison, where they were placed in stricter custody than before.

"Cartouche," writes Barbier, "has been transferred to the Conciergerie, and lodged in the Montgomery Tower, heavily ironed. The fellow who betrayed him is a well-born gentleman, but a worse miscreant than his leader. He was implicated in the Chartreux murder, and, it is asserted, washed his hands purposely in the blood of the victim. He has the Regent's pardon, signed and sealed, but will probably be imprisoned. Forty-seven of the band (men and women) have been arrested on his information."

In his new prison none were allowed access to the bandit chief except his guards, the curé of St. Barthélemy, and a priest of Sorbonne, selected for his confessor. He received his clerical visitors with respect, but declined confession; and when offered by the curé some religious books, declared he had never learned to read!

What is called the interrogatory *libre* (that which is unattended with torture), produced nothing from Cartouche. He simply denied everything, including his own identity, and affirmed that he could not comprehend what they were talking about.

The process went forward with unexampled rapidity, and on the 26th November, 1721, the Court decreed as follows:—

That "Le Camus," Louis Dominique Cartouche, *alias* Lamarc, *alias* Le Petit, *alias* Bourguignon, Jacques Maire, Jean-Pierre Balagny (called the Capuchin), Gruthus Duchâtelet, and Charles Blanchard (called the Gaillard), should be broken alive on the wheel; that their legs, thighs, arms, and reins being thus broken, their bodies should be affixed to the wheel, face upward, *pour y finir leurs jours;* Madeleine and Messier to be hanged. The whole of the prisoners to be previously submitted to the question, ordinary and extraordinary, with the view of extorting confession.

Appended to this decree was a kind of postscript, called *"retentum."* It ordered that Cartouche and Duchâtelet should be quietly strangled, after being placed on the wheel, broken as aforesaid; that Balagny and Maire should be strangled after receiving three strokes, and Blanchard without receiving any strokes at all.

The procès-verbal relating to Cartouche reports the application of the question in the form of the *brodequins,* or boots. These, as readers are possibly aware, were wooden frames fitted to the legs, into which wedges of increasing size were forcibly driven, until the legs of the sufferer were reduced to a pulp.

"Having been admonished to confess his robberies, murders, and the names of his accomplices—

"Answered that he had committed no such crimes, and had therefore no accomplices.

"On application of first, second, and third wedge, answered that he was innocent.

"At the fourth, answered that he knew not what they were speaking of.

"At the fifth, that he was innocent—was dying.

"At the sixth, that he had done all that was required of him; had done no wrong; was dying.

"At the seventh, was innocent; no accomplices.

"At the eighth and last, was innocent.

"Released and laid on a mattress, we renewed the interrogatory, but without result.

(Signed) &c."

The execution followed hard upon the preliminary torture, the disgrace of those days. On the same afternoon, November 27th, 1721, our unfortunate hero was led forth to the scene of his final earthly punishment.

The Place de la Grève was one mass of humanity, every window commanding a view of the scaffold being let for a large sum. The patience of the audience had been severely tried, for the execution was announced for noon; and it was five o'clock before the redoubted malefactor was led into the square.

To add to the disgust and disappointment of the assembled multitude, especially those who had paid, the officers, entering the Place about four o'clock, had ruthlessly removed four of the five wheels, leaving only one. Cartouche himself expressed considerable annoyance at finding himself the sole object of interest, and it was this circumstance that probably influenced the confessions he made during the last minutes of his life. The removal of the wheels was, however, only caused by the lateness of the hour, the execution having been deferred thus long to enable Cartouche to complete his reluctant revelations.

Arrived in the square, the criminal threw a fearless glance around, comprehending in it every portion of the packed assembly, many of whom had passed two entire days and nights in anticipation of the moment now arrived —eating, drinking, shouting, singing, and sleeping by turns.

In all that human sea the robber recognised no familiar face—nothing that afforded the faintest hope of the rescue he had still deemed possible, but which it needed hearts as dauntless as his own to attempt. He glanced at the compact body of the two hundred archers who hedged the scaffold, and from that moment resigned himself to die.

Sending once more for the officials, he confessed that he was indeed Louis Dominique Cartouche, the robber, although his parents and his brother were, and had always been, honest and guiltless persons. He avowed that he had murdered Pepin in the Rue des Petits Augustins, as also Tanton and Bidel. He had taken part also in the murder of Huron and of Mondelot. If there were more, it was done without premeditation, and to protect his own person. He added that in all his life he had never robbed *in a church*, though repeatedly incited to do so by Duchâtelet.

Cartouche certainly showed himself, in his confessions, *un bon camarade*, and a man by no means devoid of generous feelings. He absolved his own family with especial earnestness from any share in his misdoings. He refrained from denunciations even of those who had deserted or betrayed him, excepting only Duchâtelet, towards whom he evinced intense scorn and hatred. But, in revenge, he was unsparing in respect to the spies and receivers of the gang, whom he denounced by the score. He avowed himself the head and chief of the numerous band, so long the terror

of the capital—an assertion which, if any one feel inclined to doubt, was speedily confirmed by the confusions and discipline which on his decease became suddenly perceptible in the ranks of crime.

To the two last questions addressed to him, whether any person of condition belonged to his band, and whether he had ever accepted bribes to murder, he replied emphatically in the negative.

His confessions completed, Cartouche calmly surrendered himself to the executioners.

The procès-verbal, signed by the Greffier Drouet, announces:—

"The said Cartouche, borne upon the scaffold, and there bound and affixed to St. Andrew's cross, I for the last time demanded if he had anything else to declare, exhorting him to remember the necessity of making his peace with God, before whom he was about to appear. He replied that he had nothing to add to the avowals already made. The *Salve* was then chanted; the criminal, in accordance with the *retentum,* was at once strangled and executed; and I withdrew, attended by the officers whose names appear below."

On the 2nd December, Balagny (*alias* the Capuchin) was broken on the wheel. Like his chief, it was only when in sight of the scaffold that he made any full confession. He denounced twelve more notorious members of the band.

The 28th of March Louis Marcant was executed.

In June Barbier writes: "They are continuing the process against the Cartouchians, and have a hundred and fifty prisoners at the Conciergerie. On the eve of the Fête Dieu they executed Rozy, *alias* the Chevalier. As they were about to leave the prison he began to *jaboter* (prattle), and denounced so many accomplices that in the course of the night and following day eighty persons were apprehended, among them two police exempts, Roux and Bourlon."

In July the diarist writes: "Nothing but hangings and breakings on the wheel! Every day some Cartouchian executed. Yesterday they despatched (*expédia*) Mademoiselle Neron, the chief's mistress, a very pretty brunette. She was hanged at one o'clock."

On the 24th July, 1722, it came to the turn of "La Grande Jeanneton." Big Jenny had used her tongue to such purpose that the police arrested, on her information, fifty-two persons, chiefly innkeepers and proprietors of wine shops, some of them well to do and highly respected. Among those apprehended were two ladies who occupied rich apartments, and kept their carriage and horses. Confronted with Big Jenny, the latter denied their acquaintance. It was "une méprise de nom." The ladies were politely reconducted to their dwelling, under a guard of twenty archers, to keep the amused spectators at bay.

Poor Jenny had had to undergo the question, the *brodequins.* Strong and courageous, the girl (she was only twenty-five) preserved her fortitude till the introduction of the third wedge; but then, breaking silence, she denounced more of the band than any had done yet, delivering up to justice innumerable receivers, including three sisters of a good family, the Saint-Bigors, one of them the wife of an officer in the Luxembourg regiment.

On the 31st July a very strange execution took place. The young brother of Cartouche, *le petit* Louison, was

hung in the Place de Grève, but only by the armpits, for it was not intended that the boy should die.

He cried out very loudly at first, and begged that he might be put out of pain at once, as the weight of his body seemed to force every drop of blood down to his feet. *"Ce-qui"* (adds Barbier) *"est la souffrance des pendus."*

Later, his tongue protruded, and he spoke no more. Without waiting for the ordained two hours to expire, the lad was taken down and placed in medical care; but it was too late. He was already dead. "He was very wicked for his years," says Barbier, "and had been an accomplice of his brother from a very early age."

The same day was executed Tanton, uncle of the chief. He was the compiler of a kind of "Thieves' Directory," containing the *real* names and addresses of all distinguished robbers of the day.

Several executions followed, and it might well be thought that Paris was now rid of her worst foes. But no.

"In spite," writes our friend the diarist, "of the executions at La Grève, there are more thieves than ever in Paris. Cartouche has died on the wheel; but his name and memory engender robbers." The organization he is supposed to have given to crime was, in reality, only the disorganization of society.

The Beaucaire Diligence

It was the day of my arrival here. I had taken the Beaucaire diligence, a respectable old vehicle which had not far to go before reaching home again, but which sauntered all along the way, in order to have the appearance at night of arriving from a long distance. There were five of us on the imperial, without counting the driver.

First, a drover from Camargue, a short, thick-set, hairy man, with an odor of herds, and with large blood-shot eyes, and silver rings in his ears; next, two natives of Beaucaire, a baker and his son-in-law, both very red-faced and short-breathed, but with magnificent profiles, like two Roman medals with the image of Vitellius. Lastly, on the box-seat with the driver, a man—no, a cap, an enormous rabbit skin cap, which did not say much and gazed at the road with a distressed expression.

All these people knew one another and talked aloud of their affairs very freely. The man from Camargue said that he had come from Nimes, summoned by the examining magistrates because of a blow with a pitchfork that he had dealt a shepherd. Tempers are quick in Camargue. And what about Beaucaire! Would you believe that our two Beaucairians actually threatened to cut each other's throats on the subject of the Blessed Virgin? It seems that

the baker was from a parish devoted from time immemorial to the Madonna, to her whom the Provençals call the Good Mother, and who carries the little Jesus in her arms; the son-in-law, on the contrary, sang in the choir of a brand new church, consecrated to the Immaculate Conception, that lovely smiling image which is represented with her arms hanging at her sides and her hands full of rays of light. The quarrel arose from that fact. You should have seen how those two good Catholics abused each other and their Madonnas:

"A pretty creature your Immaculate One is!"

"Get out with your Good Mother!"

"She saw some fine doings in Palestine that hussy of yours!"

"And what about yours, hey? The ugly witch! Who knows what she didn't do? Ask St. Joseph."

Nothing save the gleaming of knives was lacking to make us fancy that we were on the wharfs at Naples; and in faith, I believe that that edifying theological contest would have ended in that way if the driver had not interfered.

"Let us alone with the Madonnas," he said laughingly to the Beaucairians; "that's all women's nonsense; men ought not to bother with it."

Thereupon he cracked his whip, with a skeptical expression which brought everybody over to his opinion.

The discussion came to an end, but the baker, having got started, felt that he must spend the rest of his ammunition, and, turning to the unfortunate cap, which sat silent and melancholy in its corner, he said with a bantering expression:

"And how about your wife, knife-grinder—which parish does she favor?"

Evidently there was some very comical allusion to that question, for the whole imperial roared with laughter. The knife-grinder did not laugh. He did not seem to have heard. Observing that, the baker turned to me:

"You don't know his wife, do you, monsieur? She's a queer kind of a churchwoman! There aren't two like her in Beaucaire."

The laughter redoubled. The knife-grinder did not budge; he simply said in a low tone, without raising his head:

"Hold your tongue, baker."

But that devil of a baker did not propose to hold his tongue, and he continued with greater zest:

"Bless my soul! the fellow isn't to be pitied for having a wife such as she. No man can be bored for an instant with her. Think of it! a beauty who has herself abducted every six months, she always has something to tell you when she comes home. It's a curious little household, I tell you. Just imagine, monsieur, that they hadn't been married a year, when paff! the wife goes off to Spain with a chocolate-peddler. The husband was left alone in the house, to weep and drink. He was like a mad-man. After some time, the charmer came back to the province dressed as a Spanish woman, with a little tambourine. We all said to her: 'Keep out of his way, or he will kill you.' Kill her! not much! they went to living together again as quietly as you please, and she taught him to play the tambourine."

There was a fresh outburst of laughter. The knife-grinder in his corner

muttered again, without raising his head:

"Hold your tongue, baker."

The baker paid no heed, but continued:

"Perhaps you think, monsieur, that after her return from Spain the charmer kept still. Not a bit of it; her husband had taken the thing so well that it made her inclined to try it again. After the Spaniard, it was a military officer, then a boatman on the Rhone, then a musician, then a—I don't know whom. The amusing part of it is that the same comedy is acted every time. The wife goes off, the husband weeps; she returns and he is consoled. And they keep on abducting her, and he keeps on taking her back. Don't you think that the fellow has patience? I must say, however, that the little woman's mighty pretty—a genuine morsel for a cardinal: dainty, and lively, and well-built; and a white skin, too, and nut-brown eyes that always laugh when she looks at a man. Faith, my Parisian, if you ever pass through Beaucaire——"

"Oh! hold your tongue, baker, I beg you!" said the poor knife-grinder once more, in a heartrending tone.

At that moment the diligence stopped. We were at the farm of Des Anglores. The two men from Beaucaire alighted, and I promise you that I did not try to detain them. That wag of a baker! we could hear him laugh after he was in the farmyard.

When they had gone the imperial seemed empty. We had left the man from Camargue at Arles; the driver was walking beside the horses. The knife-grinder and I were alone, each in his corner, saying not a word. It was hot, and the leather of the hood was scorching. At intervals I felt my eyes close and my head become heavy; but it was impossible to sleep. I had always in my ears that "hold your tongue, I beg you," so gentle, yet so heartrending. He did not sleep, either, the poor man; from behind I could see his broad shoulders quivering, and his hands, a long, colorless, stupid hand, tremble on the back of his seat, like the hand of an old man. He was weeping.

"Here you are at home, Parisian," the driver suddenly called to me; and with the end of his whip he pointed to my green hill with the mill perched upon it like a great butterfly.

I made haste to alight. As I passed the knife-grinder I tried to look under his cap; I was anxious to see his face before leaving him. As if he had understood my thought, the wretched man abruptly raised his head and, fastening his eyes upon mine, he said in a hollow voice:

"Look well at me, my friend, and if you hear one of these days that there has been trouble at Beaucaire, you will be able to say that you know the man who did it."

His face was sad and lifeless, with little faded eyes. There were tears in those eyes, but in the voice there was hatred. Hatred is the wrath of the weak! If I were the knive-grinder's wife, I should be on my guard.

The Three Strangers

Among the few features of agricultural England which retain an appearance but little modified by the lapse of centuries, may be reckoned the high, grassy and furzy downs, coombs, or ewe-leases, as they are indifferently called, that fill a large area of certain counties in the south and southwest. If any mark of human occupation is met with hereon, it usually takes the form of the solitary cottage of some shepherd.

Fifty years ago such a lonely cottage stood on such a down, and may possibly be standing there now. In spite of its loneliness, however, the spot, by actual measurement, was not more than five miles from a county-town. Yet that affected it little. Five miles of irregular upland, during the long inimical seasons, with their sleets, snows, rains, and mists, afford withdrawing space enough to isolate a Timon or a Nebuchadnezzar; much less, in fair weather, to please that less repellent tribe, the poets, philosophers, artists, and others who "conceive and meditate of pleasant things."

Some old earthen camp or barrow, some clump of trees, at least some starved fragment of ancient hedge is usually taken advantage of in the erection of these forlorn dwellings. But, in the present case, such a kind of shelter had been disregarded. Higher Crowstairs, as the house was called, stood quite detached and undefended. The only reason for its precise situation seemed to be the crossing of two footpaths at right angles hard by, which may have crossed there and thus for a good five hundred years. Hence the house was exposed to the elements on all sides. But, though the wind up here blew unmistakably when it did blow, and the rain hit hard whenever it fell, the various weathers of the winter season were not quite so formidable on the coomb as they were imagined to be by dwellers on low ground. The raw rimes were not so pernicious as in the hollows, and the frosts were scarcely so severe. When the shepherd and his family who tenanted the house were pitied for their sufferings from the exposure, they said that upon the whole they were less inconvenienced by "wuzzes and flames" (hoarses and phlegms) than when they had lived by the stream of a snug neighbouring valley.

The night of March 28, 182—, was precisely one of the nights that were wont to call forth these expressions of commiseration. The level rainstorm smote walls, slopes, and hedges like the clothyard shafts of Senlac and Crecy. Such sheep and outdoor animals as had no shelter stood with their buttocks to the winds; while the tails of little birds trying to roost on some scraggy thorn were blown inside-out like umbrellas. The gable-end of the cottage was stained with wet, and the eavesdroppings flapped against the wall. Yet never was commiseration for the shepherd more misplaced. For that cheerful rustic was

entertaining a large party in glorification of the christening of his second girl.

The guests had arrived before the rain began to fall, and they were all now assembled in the chief or living room of the dwelling. A glance into the apartment at eight o'clock on this eventful evening would have resulted in the opinion that it was as cosy and comfortable a nook as could be wished for in boisterous weather. The calling of its inhabitant was proclaimed by a number of highly-polished sheep-crooks without stems that were hung ornamentally over the fireplace, the curl of each shining crook varying from the antiquated type engraved in the patriarchal pictures of old family Bibles to the most approved fashion of the last local sheep-fair. The room was lighted by half-a-dozen candles, having wicks only a trifle smaller than the grease which enveloped them, in candle sticks that were never used but at high-days, holy-days, and family feasts. The lights were scattered about the room, two of them standing on the chimney-piece. This position of candles was in itself significant. Candles on the chimney-piece always meant a party.

On the hearth, in front of a backbrand to give substance, blazed a fire of thorns, that crackled "like the laughter of the fool."

Nineteen persons were gathered here. Of these, five women, wearing gowns of various bright hues, sat in chairs along the wall; girls shy and not shy filled the window-bench; four men, including Charley Jake the hedge-carpenter, Elijah New the parish-clerk, and John Pitcher, a neighbouring dairyman, the shepherd's father-in-law, lolled in the settle; a young man and maid, who were blushing over tentative *pourparlers* on a life-companionship, sat beneath the corner-cupboard; and an elderly engaged man of fifty or upward moved restlessly about from spots where his betrothed was not to the spot where she was. Enjoyment was pretty general, and so much the more prevailed in being unhampered by conventional restrictions. Absolute confidence in each other's good opinion begat perfect ease, while the finishing stroke of manner, amounting to a truly princely serenity, was lent to the majority by the absence of any expression or trait denoting that they wished to get on in the world, enlarge their minds, or do any eclipsing thing whatever—which nowadays so generally nips the bloom and *bonhomie* of all except the two extremes of the social scale.

Shepherd Fennel had married well, his wife being a dairyman's daughter from a vale at a distance, who brought fifty guineas in her pocket—and kept them there, till they should be required for ministering to the needs of a coming family. This frugal woman had been somewhat exercised as to the character that should be given to the gathering. A sit-still party had its advantages; but an undisturbed position of ease in chairs and settles was apt to lead on the men to such an unconscionable deal of toping that they would sometimes fairly drink the house dry. A dancing-party was the alternative; but this, while avoiding the foregoing objection on the score of good drink, had a counterbalancing disadvantage in the matter of good victuals, the ravenous appetites engendered by the exercise causing immense havoc in the buttery. Shepherdess Fennel fell back upon the intermediate plan of mingling short dances with short periods

of talk and singing, so as to hinder any ungovernable rage in either. But this scheme was entirely confined to her own gentle mind: the shepherd himself was in the mood to exhibit the most reckless phases of hospitality.

The fiddler was a boy of those parts, about twelve years of age, who had a wonderful dexterity in jigs and reels, though his fingers were so small and short as to necessitate a constant shifting for the high notes, from which he scrambled back to the first position with sounds not of unmixed purity of tone. At seven the shrill tweedle-dee of this youngster had begun, accompanied by a booming ground-bass from Elijah New, the parish-clerk, who had thoughtfully brought with him his favourite musical instrument, the serpent. Dancing was instantaneous, Mrs. Fennel privately enjoining the players on no account to let the dance exceed the length of a quarter of an hour.

But Elijah and the boy, in the excitement of their position, quite forgot the injunction. Moreover, Oliver Giles, a man of seventeen, one of the dancers, who was enamoured of his partner, a fair girl of thirty-three rolling years, had recklessly handed a new crown-piece to the musicians, as a bribe to keep going as long as they had muscle and wind. Mrs. Fennel, seeing the steam begin to generate on the countenances of her guests, crossed over and touched the fiddler's elbow and put her hand on the serpent's mouth. But they took no notice, and fearing she might lose her character of genial hostess if she were to interfere too markedly, she retired and sat down helpless. And so the dance whizzed on with cumulative fury, the performers moving in their planet-like courses, direct and retrograde, from apogee to perigee, till the hand of the well-kicked clock at the bottom of the room had traveled over the circumference of an hour.

While these cheerful events were in course of enactment within Fennel's pastoral dwelling, an incident having considerable bearing on the party had occurred in the gloomy night without. Mrs. Fennel's concern about the growing fierceness of the dance corresponded in point of time with the ascent of a human figure to the solitary hill of Higher Crowstairs from the direction of the distant town. This personage strode on through the rain without a pause, following the little-worn path which, further on in its course, skirted the shepherd's cottage.

It was nearly the time of full moon, and on this account, though the sky was lined with a uniform sheet of dripping cloud, ordinary objects out of doors were readily visible. The sad wan light revealed the lonely pedestrian to be a man of supple frame; his gait suggested that he had somewhat passed the period of perfect and instinctive agility, though not so far as to be otherwise than rapid of motion when occasion required. At a rough guess, he might have been about forty years of age. He appeared tall, but a recruiting sergeant, or other person accustomed to the judging of men's heights by the eye, would have discerned that this was chiefly owing to his gauntness, and that he was not more than five-feet-eight or nine.

Notwithstanding the regularity of his tread, there was caution in it, as in that of one who mentally feels his way; and despite the fact that it was not

a black coat nor a dark garment of any sort that he wore, there was something about him which suggested that he naturally belonged to the black-coated tribes of men. His clothes were of fustian, and his boots hobnailed, yet in his progress he showed not the mud-accustomed bearing of hobnailed and fustianed peasantry.

By the time that he had arrived abreast of the shepherd's premises the rain came down, or rather came along, with yet more determined violence. The outskirts of the little settlement partially broke the force of wind and rain, and this induced him to stand still. The most salient of the shepherd's domestic erections was an empty sty at the forward corner of his hedgeless garden, for in these latitudes the principle of masking the homelier features of your establishment by a conventional frontage was unknown. The traveler's eye was attracted to this small building by the pallid shine of the wet slates that covered it. He turned aside, and, finding it empty, stood under the pent-roof for shelter.

While he stood, the boom of the serpent within the adjacent house, and the lesser strains of the fiddler, reached the spot as an accompaniment to the surging hiss of the flying rain on the sod, its louder beating on the cabbage-leaves of the garden, on the eight or ten beehives just discernible by the path, and its dripping from the eaves into a row of buckets and pans that had been placed under the walls of the cottage. For at Higher Crowstairs, as at all such elevated domiciles, the grand difficulty of housekeeping was an insufficiency of water; and a casual rainfall was utilized by turning out, as catchers, every utensil that the house contained. Some queer stories might be told of the contrivances for economy in suds and dishwaters that are absolutely necessitated in upland habitations during the droughts of summer. But at this season there were no such exigencies; a mere acceptance of what the skies bestowed was sufficient for an abundant store.

At last the notes of the serpent ceased and the house was silent. This cessation of activity aroused the solitary pedestrian from the reverie into which he had lapsed, and, emerging from the shed, with an apparently new intention, he walked up the path to the house-door. Arrived here, his first act was to kneel down on a large stone beside the row of vessels, and to drink a copious draught from one of them. Having quenched his thirst he rose and lifted his hand to knock, but paused with his eye upon the panel. Since the dark surface of the wood revealed absolutely nothing, it was evident that he must be mentally looking through the door, as if he wished to measure thereby all the possibilities that a house of this sort might include, and how they might bear upon the question of his entry.

In his indecision he turned and surveyed the scene around. Not a soul was anywhere visible. The garden-path stretched downward from his feet, gleaming like the track of a snail; the roof of the little well (mostly dry), the well-cover, the top rail of the garden-gate, were varnished with the same dull liquid glaze; while, far away in the vale, a faint whiteness of more than usual extent showed that the rivers were high in the meads. Beyond all this winked a few bleared lamplights through the beating drops—lights that denoted

the situation of the county-town from which he had appeared to come. The absence of all notes of life in that direction seemed to clinch his intentions, and he knocked at the door.

Within, a desultory chat had taken the place of movement and musical sound. The hedge-carpenter was suggesting a song to the company, which nobody just then was inclined to undertake, so that the knock afforded a not unwelcome diversion.

"Walk in!" said the shepherd promptly.

The latch clicked upward, and out of the night our pedestrian appeared upon the door-mat. The shepherd arose, snuffed two of the nearest candles, and turned to look at him.

Their light disclosed that the stranger was dark in complexion and not unprepossessing as to feature. His hat, which for a moment he did not remove, hung low over his eyes, without concealing that they were large, open, and determined, moving with a flash rather than a glance round the room. He seemed pleased with his survey, and, baring his shaggy head, said, in a rich deep voice, "The rain is so heavy, friends, that I ask leave to come in and rest awhile."

"To be sure, stranger," said the shepherd. "And faith, you've been lucky in choosing your time, for we are having a bit of a fling for a glad cause—though, to be sure, a man could hardly wish that glad cause to happen more than once a year."

"Nor less," spoke up a woman. "For 'tis best to get your family over and done with, as soon as you can, so as to be all the earlier out of the fag o't."

"And what may be this glad cause?" asked the stranger.

"A birth and christening," said the shepherd.

The stranger hoped his host might not be made unhappy either by too many or too few of such episodes, and being invited by a gesture to a pull at the mug, he readily acquiesced. His manner, which, before entering, had been so dubious, was now altogether that of a careless and candid man.

"Late to be traipsing athwart this coomb—hey?" said the engaged man of fifty.

"Late it is, master, as you say.—I'll take a seat in the chimney-corner, if you have nothing to urge against it, ma'am; for I am a little moist on the side that was next the rain."

Mrs. Shepherd Fennel assented, and made room for the self-invited comer, who, having got completely inside the chimney-corner, stretched out his legs and his arms with the expansiveness of a person quite at home.

"Yes, I am rather cracked in the vamp," he said freely, seeing that the eyes of the shepherd's wife fell upon his boots, "and I am not well fitted either. I have had some rough times lately, and have been forced to pick up what I can get in the way of wearing, but I must find a suit better fit for working-days when I reach home."

"One of hereabouts?" she inquired.

"Not quite that—further up the country."

"I thought so. And so be I; and by your tongue you come from my neighbourhood."

"But you would hardly have heard of me," he said quickly. "My time

would be long before yours, ma'am, you see."

This testimony to the youthfulness of his hostess had the effect of stopping her cross-examination.

"There is only one thing more wanted to make me happy," continued the new-comer. "And that is a little baccy, which I am sorry to say I am out of."

"I'll fill your pipe," said the shepherd.

"I must ask you to lend me a pipe likewise."

"A smoker, and no pipe about 'ee?"

"I have dropped it somewhere on the road."

The shepherd filled and handed him a new clay pipe, saying, as he did so, "Hand me your baccy box—I'll fill that too, now I am about it."

The man went through the movement of searching his pockets.

"Lost that too?" said his entertainer, with some surprise.

"I am afraid so," said the man with some confusion. "Give it to me in a screw of paper." Lighting his pipe at the candle with a suction that drew the whole flame into the bowl, he resettled himself in the corner and bent his looks upon the faint steam from his damp legs, as if he wished to say no more.

Meanwhile the general body of guests had been taking little notice of this visitor by reason of an absorbing discussion in which they were engaged with the band about a tune for the next dance. The matter being settled, they were about to stand up when an interruption came in the shape of another knock at the door.

At sound of the same the man in the chimney-corner took up the poker and began stirring the brands as if doing it thoroughly were the one aim of his existence, and a second time the shepherd said, "Walk in!" In a moment another man stood upon the straw-woven door-mat. He too was a stranger.

This individual was one of a type radically different from the first. There was more of the commonplace in his manner, and a certain jovial cosmopolitanism sat upon his features. He was several years older than the first arrival, his hair being slightly frosted, his eyebrows bristly, and his whiskers cut back from his cheeks. His face was rather full and flabby, and yet it was not altogether a face without power. A few grog-blossoms marked the neighbourhood of his nose. He flung back his long drab greatcoat, revealing that beneath it he wore a suit of cinder-gray shade throughout, large heavy seals, of some metal or other that would take a polish, dangling from his fob as his only personal ornament. Shaking the water-drops from his low-crowned glazed hat, he said, "I must ask for a few minutes' shelter, comrades, or I shall be wetted to my skin before I get to Casterbridge."

"Make yourself at home, master," said the shepherd, perhaps a trifle less heartily than on the first occasion. Not that Fennel had the least tinge of niggardliness in his composition; but the room was far from large, spare chairs were not numerous, and damp companions were not altogether desirable at close quarters for the women and girls in their bright-coloured gowns.

However, the second comer, after taking off his greatcoat, and hanging his hat on a nail in one of the ceiling-

beams as if he had been specially invited to put it there, advanced and sat down at the table. This had been pushed so closely into the chimney-corner, to give all available room to the dancers, that its inner edge grazed the elbow of the man who had ensconced himself by the fire; and thus the two strangers were brought into close companionship. They nodded to each other by way of breaking the ice of unacquaintance, and the first stranger handed his neighbour the family mug—a huge vessel of brown ware, having its upper edge worn away like a threshold by the rub of whole generations of thirsty lips that had gone the way of all flesh, and bearing the following inscription burnt upon its rotund side in yellow letters:—

THERE IS NO FUN
UNTIL I CUM.

The other man, nothing loth, raised the mug to his lips, and drank on, and on, and on—till a curious blueness overspread the countenance of the shepherd's wife, who had regarded with no little surprize the first stranger's free offer to the second of what did not belong to him to dispense.

"I knew it!" said the toper to the shepherd with much satisfaction. "When I walked up your garden before coming in, and saw the hives all of a row, I said to myself, 'Where there's bees there's honey, and where there's honey there's mead.' But mead of such a truly comfortable sort as this I really didn't expect to meet in my older days." He took yet another pull at the mug, till it assumed an ominous elevation.

"Glad you enjoy it!" said the shepherd warmly.

"It is goodish mead," assented Mrs. Fennel, with an absence of enthusiasm which seemed to say that it was possible to buy praise for one's cellar at too heavy a price. "It is trouble enough to make—and really I hardly think we shall make any more. For honey sells well, and we ourselves can make shift with a drop o' small mead and metheglin for common use from the combwashings."

"O, but you'll never have the heart!" reproachfully cried the stranger in cinder-gray, after taking up the mug a third time and setting it down empty. "I love mead, when 'tis old like this, as I love to go to church o' Sundays, or to relieve the needy any day of the week."

"Ha, ha, ha!" said the man in the chimney-corner, who, in spite of the taciturnity induced by the pipe of tobacco, could not or would not refrain from this slight testimony to his comrade's humour.

Now the old mead of those days, brewed of the purest first-year or maiden honey, four pounds to the gallon —with its due complement of white of eggs, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, mace, rosemary, yeast, and processes of working, bottling, and cellaring—tasted remarkably strong; but it did not taste so strong as it actually was. Hence, presently, the stranger in cinder-gray at the table, moved by its creeping influence, unbuttoned his waistcoat, threw himself back in his chair, spread his legs, and made his presence felt in various ways.

"Well, well, as I say," he resumed, "I am going to Casterbridge, and to Casterbridge I must go. I should have been almost there by this time; but

the rain drove me into your dwelling, and I'm not sorry for it."

"You don't live in Casterbridge?" said the shepherd.

"Not as yet; though I shortly mean to move there."

"Going to set up in trade, perhaps?"

"No, no," said the shepherd's wife. "It is easy to see that the gentleman is rich, and don't want to work at anything."

The cinder-gray stranger paused, as if to consider whether he would accept that definition of himself. He presently rejected it by answering, "Rich is not quite the word for me, dame. I do work, and I must work. And even if I only get to Casterbridge by midnight I must begin work there at eight to-morrow morning. Yet, het or wet, blow or snow, famine or sword, my day's work to-morrow must be done."

"Poor man! Then, in spite o' seeming, you be worse off than we?" replied the shepherd's wife.

"'Tis the nature of my trade, men and maidens. 'Tis the nature of my trade more than my poverty. . . . But really and truly I must up and off, or I shan't get a lodging in the town." However, the speaker did not move, and directly added, "There's time for one more draught of friendship before I go; and I'd perform it at once if the mug were not dry."

"Here's a mug o' small," said Mrs. Fennel. "Small, we call it, though it be sure 'tis only the first wash o' the combs."

"No," said the stranger disdainfully. "I won't spoil your first kindness by partaking o' your second."

"Certainly not," broke in Fennel. "We don't increase and multiply every day, and I'll fill the mug again." He went away to the dark place under the stairs where the barrel stood. The shepherdess followed him.

"Why should you do this?" she said reproachfully, as soon as they were alone. "He's emptied it once, though it held enough for ten people; and now he's not contented wi' the small, but must needs call for more o' the strong! And a stranger unbeknown to any of us. For my part, I don't like the look o' the man at all."

"But he's in the house, my honey; and 'tis a wet night, and a christening. Daze it, what's a cup of mead more or less? There'll be plenty more next beeburning."

"Very well—this time, then," she answered, looking wistfully at the barrel. "But what is the man's calling, and where is he one of, that he should come in and join us like this?"

"I don't know. I'll ask him again."

The catastrophe of having the mug drained dry at one pull by the stranger in cinder-gray was effectually guarded against this time by Mrs. Fennell. She poured out his allowance in a small cup, keeping the large one at a discreet distance from him. When he had tossed off his portion the shepherd renewed his inquiry about the stranger's occupation.

The latter did not immediately reply, and the man in the chimney-corner, with sudden demonstrativeness, said, "Anybody may know my trade—I'm a wheelwright."

"A very good trade for these parts," said the shepherd.

"And anybody may know mine—if they've the sense to find it out," said the stranger in cinder-gray.

"You may generally tell what a man

is by his claws," observed the hedge-carpenter, looking at his own hands. "My fingers be as full of thorns as an old pin-cushion is of pins."

The hands of the man in the chimney-corner instinctively sought the shade, and he gazed into the fire as he resumed his pipe. The man at the table took up the hedge-carpenter's remark, and added smartly, "True; but the oddity of my trade is that, instead of setting a mark upon me, it sets a mark upon my customers."

No observation being offered by anybody in elucidation of this enigma, the shepherd's wife once more called for a song. The same obstacles presented themselves as at the former time—one had no voice, another had forgotten the first verse. The stranger at the table, whose soul had now risen to a good working temperature, relieved the difficulty by exclaiming that, to start the company, he would sing himself. Thrusting one thumb into the arm-hole of his waistcoat, he waved the other hand in the air, and, with an extemporizing gaze at the shining sheep-crooks above the mantelpiece, began:—

"O my trade it is the rarest one,
Simple shepherds all—
My trade is a sight to see;
For my customers I tie, and take them up on high,
And waft 'em to a far countree!"

The room was silent when he had finished the verse—with one exception, that of the man in the chimney-corner, who, at the singer's word, "Chorus!" joined him in a deep bass voice of musical relish—

"And waft 'em to a far countree!"

Oliver Giles, John Pitcher the dairyman, the parish-clerk, the engaged man of fifty, the row of young women against the wall, seemed lost in thought not of the gayest kind. The shepherd looked meditatively on the ground, the shepherdess gazed keenly at the singer, and with some suspicion; she was doubting whether this stranger were merely singing an old song from recollection, or was composing one there and then for the occasion. All were as perplexed at the obscure revelation as the guests at Belshazzar's Feast, except the man in the chimney-corner, who quietly said, "Second verse, stranger," and smoked on.

The singer thoroughly moistened himself from his lips inwards, and went on with the next stanza as requested:—

"My tools are but common ones,
Simple shepherds all—
My tools are no sight to see:
A little hempen string, and a post whereon to swing,
Are implements enough for me!"

Shepherd Fennel glanced round. There was no longer any doubt that the stranger was answering his question rhythmically. The guests one and all started back with suppressed exclamations. The young woman engaged to the man of fifty fainted half-way, and would have proceeded, but finding him wanting in alacrity for catching her she sat down trembling.

"O, he's the——!" whispered the people in the background, mentioning the name of an ominous public officer. "He's come to do it! 'Tis to be at

Casterbridge jail to-morrow—the man for sheep-stealing—the poor clock-maker we heard of, who used to live away at Shottsford and had no work to do—Timothy Summers, whose family were a-starving, and so he went out of Shottsford by the high-road, and took a sheep in open daylight, defying the farmer and the farmer's wife and the farmer's lad, and every man jack among 'em. He" (and they nodded towards the stranger of the deadly trade) "is come from up the country to do it because there's not enough to do in his own county-town, and he's got the place here now our own county man's dead; he's going to live in the same cottage under the prison wall."

The stranger in cinder-gray took no notice of this whispered string of observations, but again wetted his lips. Seeing that his friend in the chimney-corner was the only one who reciprocated his joviality in any way, he held out his cup towards that appreciative comrade, who also held out his own. They clinked together, the eyes of the rest of the room hanging upon the singer's actions. He parted his lips for the third verse; but at that moment another knock was audible upon the door. This time the knock was faint and hesitating.

The company seemed scared; the shepherd looked with consternation towards the entrance, and it was with some effort that he resisted his alarmed wife's deprecatory glance, and uttered for the third time the welcoming words, "Walk in!"

The door was gently opened, and another man stood upon the mat. He, like those who had preceded him, was a stranger. This time it was a short, small personage, of fair complexion, and dressed in a decent suit of dark clothes.

"Can you tell me the way to——?" he began: when, gazing round the room to observe the nature of the company amongst whom he had fallen, his eyes lighted on the stranger in cinder-gray. It was just at the instant when the latter, who had thrown his mind into his song with such a will that he scarcely heeded the interruption, silenced all whispers and inquiries by bursting into his third verse:—

"To-morrow is my working day,
Simple shepherds all—
To-morrow is a working day for me:
For the farmer's sheep is slain, and the
lad who did it ta'en,
And on his soul may God ha' merc-y!"

The stranger in the chimney-corner, waving cups with the singer so heartily that his mead splashed over on the hearth, repeated in his bass voice as before:—

"And on his soul may God ha'
merc-y!"

All this time the third stranger had been standing in the doorway. Finding now that he did not come forward or go on speaking, the guests particularly regarded him. They noticed to their surprize that he stood before them the picture of abject terror—his knees trembling, his hand shaking so violently that the door-latch by which he supported himself rattled audibly: his white lips were parted, and his eyes fixed on the merry officer of justice in the middle of the room. A moment more

and he had turned, closed the door, and fled.

"What a man can it be?" said the shepherd.

The rest, between the awfulness of their late discovery and the odd conduct of this third visitor, looked as if they knew not what to think, and said nothing. Instinctively they withdrew further and further from the grim gentleman in their midst, whom some of them seemed to take for the Prince of Darkness himself, till they formed a remote circle, an empty space of floor being left between them and him——

". . . circulus, cujus centrum diabolus."

The room was so silent—though there were more than twenty people in it—that nothing could be heard but the patter of the rain against the window-shutters, accompanied by the occasional hiss of a stray drop that fell down the chimney into the fire, and the steady puffing of the man in the corner, who had now resumed his pipe of long clay.

The stillness was unexpectedly broken. The distant sound of a gun reverberated through the air—apparently from the direction of the county-town.

"Be jiggered!" cried the stranger who had sung the song, jumping up.

"What does that mean?" asked several.

"A prisoner escaped from the jail—that's what it means."

All listened. The sound was repeated, and none of them spoke but the man in the chimney-corner, who said quietly, "I've often been told that in this county they fire a gun at such times; but I never heard it till now."

"I wonder if it is *my* man?" murmured the personage in cinder-gray.

"Surely it is!" said the shepherd involuntarily. "And surely we've zeed him! That little man who looked in at the door by now, and quivered like a leaf when he zeed ye and heard your song!"

"His teeth chattered, and the breath went out of his body," said the dairyman.

"And his heart seemed to sink within him like a stone," said Oliver Giles.

"And he bolted as if he'd been shot at," said the hedge-carpenter.

"True—his teeth chattered, and his heart seemed to sink; and he bolted as if he'd been shot at," slowly summed up the man in the chimney-corner.

"I didn't notice it," remarked the hangman.

"We were all a-wondering what made him run off in such a fright," faltered one of the women against the wall, "and now 'tis explained!"

The firing of the alarm-gun went on at intervals, low and sullenly, and their suspicions became a certainty. The sinister gentleman in cinder-gray roused himself. "Is there a constable here?" he asked, in thick tones. "If so, let him step forward."

The engaged man of fifty stepped quavering out from the wall, his betrothed beginning to sob on the back of the chair.

"You are a sworn constable?"

"I be, sir."

"Then pursue the criminal at once, with assistance, and bring him back here. He can't have gone far."

"I will, sir, I will—when I've got my staff. I'll go home and get it, and come sharp here, and start in a body."

"Staff!—never mind your staff; the man'll be gone!"

"But I can't do nothing without my staff—can I, William, and John, and Charles Jake? No; for there's the king's royal crown a painted on en in yaller and gold, and the lion and the unicorn, so as when I raise en up and hit my prisoner, 'tis made a lawful blow thereby. I wouldn't 'tempt to take up a man without my staff—no, not I. If I hadn't the law to gie me courage, why, instead o' my taking up him he might take up me!"

"Now, I'm a king's man myself, and can give you authority enough for this," said the formidable officer in gray. "Now then, all of ye, be ready. Have ye any lanterns?"

"Yes—have ye any lanterns?—I demand it!" said the constable.

"And the rest of you able-bodied—"

"Able-bodied men—yes—the rest of ye!" said the constable.

"Have you some good stout staves and pitchforks——"

"Staves and pitchforks—in the name o' the law! And take 'em in yer hands and go in quest, and do as we in authority tell ye!"

Thus aroused, the men prepared to give chase. The evidence was, indeed, though circumstantial, so convincing, that but little argument was needed to show the shepherd's guests that after what they had seen it would look very much like connivance if they did not instantly pursue the unhappy third stranger, who could not as yet have gone more than a few hundred yards over such uneven country.

A shepherd is always well provided with lanterns; and lighting these hastily, and with hurdle-staves in their hands, they poured out of the door, taking a direction along the crest of the hill, away from the town, the rain having fortunately a little abated.

Disturbed by the noise, or possibly by unpleasant dreams of her baptism, the child who had been christened began to cry heart-brokenly in the room overhead. These notes of grief came down through the chinks of the floor to the ears of the women below, who jumped up one by one, and seemed glad of the excuse to ascend and comfort the baby, for the incidents of the last half-hour greatly oppressed them. Thus in the space of two or three minutes the room on the ground-floor was deserted quite.

But it was not for long. Hardly had the sound of footsteps died away when a man returned round the corner of the house from the direction the pursuers had taken. Peeping in at the door, and seeing nobody there, he entered leisurely. It was the stranger of the chimney-corner, who had gone out with the rest. The motive of his return was shown by his helping himself to a cut piece of skimmer-cake that lay on a ledge beside where he had sat, and which he had apparently forgotten to take with him. He also poured out half a cup more mead from the quantity that remained, ravenously eating and drinking these as he stood. He had not finished when another figure came in just as quietly—his friend in cinder-gray.

"O—you here?" said the latter, smiling. "I thought you had gone to help in the capture." And this speaker also revealed the object of his return by looking solicitously round for the fascinating mug of old mead.

"And I thought you had gone," said the other, continuing his skimmer-cake with some effort.

"Well, on second thoughts, I felt there were enough without me," said the first confidentially, "and such a night as it is, too. Besides, 'tis the business o' the Government to take care of its criminals—not mine."

"True; so it is. And I felt as you did, that there were enough without me."

"I don't want to break my limbs running over the humps and hollows of this wild country."

"Nor I neither, between you and me."

"These shepherd-people are used to it—simple-minded souls, you know, stirred up to anything in a moment. They'll have him ready for me before the morning, and no trouble to me at all."

"They'll have him, and we shall have saved ourselves all labour in the matter."

"True, true. Well, my way is to Casterbridge; and 'tis as much as my legs will do to take me that far. Going the same way?"

"No, I am sorry to say! I have to get home over there" (he nodded indefinitely to the right), "and I feel as you do, that it is quite enough for my legs to do before bedtime."

The other had by this time finished the mead in the mug, after which, shaking hands heartily at the door, and wishing each other well, they went their several ways.

In the meantime the company of pursuers had reached the end of the hog's-back elevation which dominated this part of the down. They had decided on no particular plan of action; and, finding that the man of the baleful trade was no longer in their company, they seemed quite unable to form any such plan now. They descended in all directions down the hill, and straightway several of the party fell into the snare set by Nature for all misguided midnight ramblers over this part of the cretaceous formation. The "lanchets," or flint slopes, which belted the escarpment at intervals of a dozen yards, took the less cautious ones unawares, and losing their footing on the rubbly steep they slid sharply downwards, the lanterns rolling from their hands to the bottom, and there lying on their sides till the horn was scorched through.

When they had again gathered themselves together, the shepherd, as the man who knew the country best, took the lead, and guided them round these treacherous inclines. The lanterns, which seemed rather to dazzle their eyes and warn the fugitive than to assist them in the exploration, were extinguished, due silence was observed; and in this more rational order they plunged into the vale. It was a grassy, briery, moist defile, affording some shelter to any person who had sought it; but the party perambulated it in vain, and ascended on the other side. Here they wandered apart, and after an interval closed together again to report progress. At the second time of closing in they found themselves near a lonely ash, the single tree on this part of the coomb, probably sown there by a passing bird some fifty years before. And here, standing a little to one side of the trunk, as motionless as the trunk itself, appeared the man they were in quest of, his outline being well defined

against the sky beyond. The band noiselessly drew up and faced him.

"Your money or your life!" said the constable sternly to the still figure.

"No, no," whispered John Pitcher. "'Tisn't our side ought to say that. That's the doctrine of vagabonds like him, and we be on the side of the law."

"Well, well," replied the constable impatiently; "I must say something, mustn't I? and if you had all the weight o' this undertaking upon your mind, perhaps you'd say the wrong thing too! —Prisoner at the bar, surrender, in the name of the Father—the Crown, I mane!"

The man under the tree seemed now to notice them for the first time, and, giving them no opportunity whatever for exhibiting their courage, he strolled slowly towards them. He was, indeed, the little man, the third stranger; but his trepidation had in a great measure gone.

"Well, travelers," he said, "did I hear ye speak to me?"

"You did: you've got to come and be our prisoner at once!" said the constable. "We arrest 'ee on the charge of not biding in Casterbridge jail in a decent proper manner to be hung to-morrow morning. Neighbours, do your duty, and seize the culpet!"

On hearing the charge, the man seemed enlightened, and, saying not another word, resigned himself with preternatural civility to the search-party, who, with their staves in their hands, surrounded him on all sides, and marched him back towards the shepherd's cottage.

It was eleven o'clock by the time they arrived. The light shining from the open door, a sound of men's voices within, proclaimed to them as they approached the house that some new events had arisen in their absence. On entering they discovered the shepherd's living room to be invaded by two officers from Casterbridge jail, and a well-known magistrate who lived at the nearest country-seat, intelligence of the escape having become generally circulated.

"Gentlemen," said the constable, "I have brought back your man—not without risk and danger; but every one must do his duty! He is inside this circle of able-bodied persons, who have lent me useful aid, considering their ignorance of Crown work. Men, bring forward your prisoner!" And the third stranger was led to the light.

"Who is this?" said one of the officials.

"The man," said the constable.

"Certainly not," said the turnkey; and the first corroborated his statement.

"But how can it be otherwise?" asked the constable. "Or why was he so terrified at sight o' the singing instrument of the law who sat there?" Here he related the strange behaviour of the third stranger on entering the house during the hangman's song.

"Can't understand it," said the officer coolly. "All I know is that it is not the condemned man. He's quite a different character from this one; a gauntish fellow, with dark hair and eyes, rather good-looking and with a musical bass voice that if you heard it once you'd never mistake as long as you lived."

"Why, souls—'twas the man in the chimney-corner!"

"Hey—what?" said the magistrate, coming forward after inquiring particu-

lars from the shepherd in the background. "Haven't you got the man after all?"

"Well, sir," said the constable, "he's the man we were in search of, that's true; and yet he's not the man we were in search of. For the man we were in search of was not the man we wanted, sir, if you understand my every-day way; for 'twas the man in the chimney-corner!"

"A pretty kettle of fish altogether!" said the magistrate. "You had better start for the other man at once."

The prisoner now spoke for the first time. The mention of the man in the chimney-corner seemed to have moved him as nothing else could do. "Sir," he said, stepping forward to the magistrate, "take no more trouble about me. The time is come when I may as well speak. I have done nothing; my crime is that the condemned man is my brother. Early this afternoon I left home at Shottsford to tramp it all the way to Casterbridge jail to bid him farewell; I was benighted, and called here to rest and ask the way. When I opened the door I saw before me the very man, my brother, that I thought to see in the condemned cell at Casterbridge. He was in this chimney-corner; and jammed close to him, so that he could not have got out if he had tried, was the executioner who'd come to take his life, singing a song about it and not knowing that it was his victim who was close by, joining in to save appearances. My brother looked a glance of agony at me, and I knew he meant, 'Don't reveal what you see; my life depends on it.' I was so terror-struck that I could hardly stand, and, not knowing what I did, I turned and hurried away."

The narrator's manner and tone had the stamp of truth, and his story made a great impression on all around. "And do you know where your brother is at the present time?" asked the magistrate.

"I do not. I have never seen him since I closed this door."

"I can testify to that, for we've been between ye ever since," said the constable.

"Where does he think to fly to?—what is his occupation?"

"He's a watch-and-clock-maker, sir."

"'A said a' was a wheelwright—a wicked rogue," said the constable.

"The wheels of clocks and watches he meant, no doubt," said Shepherd Fennel. "I thought his hands were palish for trade."

"Well, it appears to me that nothing can be gained by retaining this poor man in custody," said the magistrate; "your business lies with the other, unquestionably."

And so the little man was released off-hand; but he looked nothing the less sad on that account, it being beyond the power of the magistrate or constable to raze out the written troubles in his brain, for they concerned another whom he regarded with more solicitude than himself. When this was done, and the man had gone his way, the night was found to be so far advanced that it was deemed useless to renew the search before the next morning.

Next day, accordingly, the quest for the clever sheep-stealer became general and keen, to all appearance at least. But the intended punishment was cruel-

ly disproportioned to the transgression, and the sympathy of a great many country-folk in that district was strongly on the side of the fugitive. Moreover, his marvelous coolness and daring in hob-and-nobbing with the hangman, under the unprecedented circumstances of the shepherd's party, won their admiration. So that it may be questioned if all those who ostensibly made themselves so busy in exploring woods and fields and lanes were quite so thorough when it came to the private examination of their own lofts and outhouses. Stories were afloat of a mysterious figure being occasionally seen in some old overgrown trackway or other, remote from turnpike roads; but when a search was instituted in any of these suspected quarters nobody was found. Thus the days and weeks passed without tidings.

In brief, the bass-voiced man of the chimney-corner was never recaptured. Some said that he went across the sea, others that he did not, but buried himself in the depths of a populous city. At any rate, the gentleman in cinder-gray never did his morning's work at Casterbridge, nor met anywhere at all, for business purposes, the genial comrade with whom he had passed an hour of relaxation in the lonely house on the coomb.

The grass has long been green on the graves of Shepherd Fennel and his frugal wife; the guests who made up the christening party have mainly followed their entertainers to the tomb; the baby in whose honour they all had met is a matron in the sere and yellow leaf. But the arrival of the three strangers at the shepherd's that night, and the details connected therewith, is a story as well known as ever in the country about Higher Crowstairs.

Ghosts in Court

In the French courts, questions of ghost or no ghost—and, if the former, what might be the worth of the ghost's testimony—seem to have been permitted a wider range. Counsel has been freely heard on either part. In a case that, many years ago, stirred up the whole philosophy of the subject, so much curious matter was elicited as to make the record worth preserving. It is an illustration of the familiar manner in which a not distant generation dealt with the subject.

Honoré Mirabel, a poor labourer on the estate of a family named Gay, near Marseilles, invoked the protection of the law under the following extraordinary circumstances:—

He declared that, while lying under an almond-tree, late one night, striving to sleep, he suddenly noticed a man of remarkable appearance standing, in the full moonlight, at the window of a neighbouring house. Knowing the house to be unoccupied, he rose to question the intruder, when the latter disap-

peared. A ladder being at hand, Mirabel mounted to the window, and, on entering, found no one. Struck with a feeling of terror, he descended the ladder with all speed, and had barely touched the ground, when a voice at his back accosted him:

"Pertuisan" (he was of Pertuis), "there is a large treasure buried close at hand. Dig, and it is yours."

A small stone was dropped on the terrace, as if to mark the spot alluded to.

For reasons not explained, the favoured Mirabel shrank from pursuing the adventure alone, but communicated with a friend, one Bernard, a labourer in the employ of the farmeress Paret. This lady being admitted to their confidence, the three assembled next night at the place indicated by the spectre, and, after digging to a considerable depth, came upon a large parcel wrapped in many folds of linen. Struck with the pickaxe, it returned unmistakably the melodious sound of coin; but the filthy, and, as Paret suggested, plague-stricken appearance of the covering, checked their eager curiosity, until, having been conveyed home and well soaked in wine, the parcel was opened, and revealed to their delighted gaze more than a thousand large gold pieces, subsequently ascertained to be Portuguese.

It was remarkable, yet so it *was*, that Mirabel was allowed to retain the whole of the treasure. Perhaps his friends felt some scruple in interfering with the manifest intentions of the ghost. But Mirabel was not much the happier for it. He feared for the safety of his wealth—he feared for his own life. Moreover, the prevailing laws respecting "treasure-trove" were peculiarly explicit, and it was questionable how far the decision of the ghost might be held to override them.

In France, of treasure found in the highway, half belonged to the king, half to the finder. If in any other public place, half to the high-justiciary, half to the finder. If discovered by magical arts, the whole to the king, with a penalty upon the finder. If, when discovered, the treasure was concealed from the proprietor of the ground, the finder forfeited his share. To these existing claims the phantom had made no allusion. In his perplexity, honest Mirabel bethought him of another friend, one Auguier, a substantial tradesman of Marseilles.

The advice of this gentleman was, that the secret should be rigorously confined to those who already knew it, while he himself (Auguier) was prepared to devote himself, heart and soul, to his friend's best interests, lend him any cash he needed (so as to obviate the necessity of changing the foreign money), attend him whithersoever he went, and, in fine, become his perpetual solace, monitor, and guard.

To prevent the possibility of his motives being misinterpreted, the worthy Auguier took occasion to exhibit to his friend a casket, in which was visible much gold and silver coin, besides a jewel or two of some value.

The friendship thus happily inaugurated grew and strengthened, until Mirabel came to the prudent resolution of entrusting the whole treasure to the custody of his friend, and appointed a place and time for that purpose.

On the way to the rendezvous, Mirabel met with an acquaintance, Gaspard Deleuil, whom—Auguier being already

in sight—Mirabel requested to wait for him at the side of a thicket; then, going forward, he handed to the trusty Auguier two sealed bags, one of them secured with a red ribbon, the other with a blue, and received in return an instrument conceived in the following satisfactory terms:—

"I acknowledge myself indebted to Honoré Mirabel twenty thousand livres, which I promise to pay on demand, acquitting him, moreover, of forty livres which he owes me. Done at Marseilles, this seventh of September.

(Signed) "Louis Auguier."

This little matter settled, Mirabel rejoined Deleuil, and the next day departed for his native village. After starring it there for a few weeks, the man of wealth revisited Marseilles, and, having passed a jovial evening with his friend and banker, Auguier, was on his way home, when, at a dark part of the road, he was set upon by a powerful ruffian, who dealt him several blows with some sharp weapon, flung him to the ground and escaped. Fortunately, the wounds proved superficial.

This incident begat a certain suspicion in the mind of Mirabel. As soon as he was able, he repaired to Marseilles, and demanded of Auguier the return of his money, or liquidation of the bond. His friend expressed his extreme surprise. What an extraordinary application was here! Money! What money? He indignantly denied the whole transaction. Mirabel must be mad.

To establish his sanity, and, at the same time, refresh the memory of his friend, Mirabel without further ceremony appealed to the law, and, in due course, the Lieutenant-Criminal, with his officer, made his appearance at the house of Auguier, to conduct the perquisition. Search being made on the premises, no money was found; but there were discovered two bags and a red ribbon, which were identified by Mirabel as those which he had delivered to his friend.

The account given by the latter differed, in some material particulars, from that of Mirabel. He had enjoyed, indeed, some casual acquaintance with that gentleman. They had dined together, once, at his (Auguier's) house. He had accepted the hospitality of Mons. Mirabel, as often, at a tavern. He had advanced that gentleman a crown. Mirabel had spoken of a ghost and money, and had talked of placing the latter in his charge. At present, he had, however, limited his confidence to the deposit of two empty bags and a red ribbon. All the other allegations he indignantly denied.

Deeply impressed with the marvellous history, the Lieutenant-Criminal decided that the matter should be sifted to the bottom. The process continued.

Magdalene Paret deposed that Mirabel had called on her one day, looking pale and agitated, and declared that he had been holding converse with an apparition, which had revealed to him the situation of some buried treasure. She was present when the parcel, apparently containing money, was found; and she remembered Mirabel stating, subsequently, that he had placed it for safety in the hands of Auguier.

Gaspard Deleuil repeated the narrative told by Mirabel of the ghost and the gold, adding that he had met him

on the seventh of September, near the Porte des Fainéants (Idlers' Gate), carrying two bags; that he saw him hand them over to a man who appeared to be waiting for him, and saw him receive in return a piece of paper; and that, on rejoining him, Mirabel stated that he had entrusted to Auguier some newly-found treasure, taking his acknowledgment for the same.

Francois Fournière, the third witness, confirmed the story of the spectre and the money, as related by Mirabel, who appeared deeply stricken by the extraordinary favour shown him in this supernatural visitation. On his pressing for a sight of the treasure, Mirabel took the witness to his chamber, and, removing some bricks from the chimney, displayed a large bag filled with gold coin. Having afterwards heard of Auguier's alleged dishonesty, the witness reproached him with it: when he became deadly pale, and entreated that the subject might be dropped.

Other witnesses deposed to the sudden intimacy, more noticeable on account of their difference of station, that had sprung up between Mirabel and Auguier, dating from the period of the discovery of the gold. Sundry experts bore testimony to the resemblance of the writing of the receipt, signed "Louis Auguier," to the autograph of the latter.

The ghost and Mirabel carried the day. In fact, it was a mere walk over the course. The Lieutenant-Criminal, entirely with them, decreed that Auguier should be arrested, and submitted to the "question."

Appeal, however, was made to the parliament of Aix, and the matter began to excite considerable notice. Persons were found to censure the ready credence given by the Lieutenant-Criminal to the story of the ghost, and, the case coming to hearing, an able advocate of the day buckled on his armour to do battle with the shade.

Is it credible (he asked) that a spirit should quit the repose of another world expressly to inform Mons. de Mirabel, a gentleman with whose existence it seems to have had no previous acquaintance, of the hiding-place of this treasure? How officious must be the nature of that ghost which should select, in a caprice, a man it did not personally know, to enrich him with a treasure, for the due enjoyment of which his social position made him so unfit? How slight must be the prescience of a spirit that could not foresee that Mirabel would be deprived of his treasure by the first knave he had the misfortune to trust! There could be no such spirit, be assured.

If there were no spectre, there was, according to all human probability, no gold; and, if no gold, no ground for the accusation of Auguier.

Descending to earthly reasoning, was it likely that Mirabel should entrust to Auguier a treasure of whose actual value he knew nothing, or that he should take in return a receipt he had not seen the giver write? How was it, pray, that the woman Paret and Gaspard Deleuil demanded no share in the treasure so discovered? Were these excellent persons superior to the common weaknesses of humanity—curiosity, and the lust of gain? The witness Paret certainly saw the discovery of a parcel; but the rest of her evidence was hearsay. The witness Deleuil saw the exchange of bags and paper; but all

the rest—spectre included—was hearsay. And when the witness Fournière declared that Auguier, being taxed with robbery, turned deadly pale, Auguier frankly—nay, proudly—confessed it, stricken as that honourable burgher was with horror at a charge so foul and unexpected! The climax of injustice was surely reached when this respected, estimable, substantial merchant of France's proudest sea-mart, was, on the uncorroborated word of a ghost (for to this it must be traced), submitted to the torture. In criminal, even more than in civil cases, that which seems repugnant to probability is reputed false. Let a hundred witnesses testify to that which is contrary to nature and the light of reason, their evidence is worthless and vain. Take, as example, the famous tradition which gives an additional interest to the noble house of Lusignan, and say that certain persons swore that the fairy Melusina, who had the tail of a serpent, and bathed every Saturday in a marble cellar, had revealed a treasure to some weak idiot, who was immediately robbed of it by another. What would be thought of a judge who should, on such testimony, condemn the accused? Is it on such a fairy fable that Auguier, the just, the respected family-father, the loyal patriot, must be adjudged guilty? Never! Such justice might be found at Cathay, might prevail in the yet undiscovered islands of the Eastern Archipelago, but in France —no. There remained, in short, but one manifest duty to the court, namely, to acquit, with all honour, this much-abused man, and to render him such noble compensation as the injuries he had suffered deserved.

It was now, however, the phantom's innings. Turning on the court the night-side of nature, the spectre's advocate pointed out that the gist of Auguier's defence consisted of a narrow and senseless satire upon supernatural visitations, involving a most unauthorized assumption that such things did never occur. Was it intended to contradict holy writ? To deny a truth attested by Scripture, by the Fathers of the Church, by very wide experience and testimony, finally, by the Faculty of Theology of Paris? The speaker here adduced the appearance of the prophet Samuel at Endor (of which Le Brun remarked that it was, past question, a work commenced by the power of evil, but taken from his hand and completed by a stronger than he); that of the bodies of buried saints after our Lord's resurrection; and that of Saint Felix, who, according to Saint Augustine, appeared to the besieged inhabitants of Nola. But, say that any doubts could rationally exist, were they not completely set at rest by a recent decision of the Faculty of Theology? "Desiring," says this enlightened decree, "to satisfy pious scruples, we have, after a very careful consideration of the subject, resolved that the spirits of the departed may and do, by supernatural power and divine licence, reappear unto the living." And this opinion was in conformity with that pronounced at Sorbornne two centuries before.

However, it was not dogmatically affirmed that the spirit which had evinced this interest in Mirabel was the ghost of any departed person. It might have been a spirit, whether good or evil, of another kind. That such a spirit can assume the human form few will deny, when they recall that the apostles held

that belief, mistaking their Lord, walking on the waves of Galilee, for such an one. The weight of probability, nevertheless, inclines to the side of this singular apparition being, as was first suggested, the spirit of one deceased—perhaps, a remote ancestor of Mirabel—perhaps, one who, in this life, sympathized with honest endeavour, and sought to endow the struggling toiling peasant with the means of rest and ease. And, with regard to this reappearance, a striking modern instance seemed pertinent to the question at issue. The Marquis de Rambouillet and the Sieur de Prècy, aged respectively twenty-five and thirty, were intimate friends. Speaking one day of the prospect of a future state of being, their conversation ended with a mutual compact that the first who died should reveal himself to the survivor. Three months afterwards the Marquis went to the war in Flanders, while De Prècy, sick with fever, remained in Paris. One night, the latter, while in bed, heard the curtains move, and, turning, recognised his friend, in buff-coat and riding-boots, standing by the bed. Starting up, he attempted to embrace the visitor, but the latter, evading him, drew apart, and, in a solemn tone, informed him that such greetings were no longer fitting, that he had been slain the previous night in a skirmish, that he had come to redeem his promise, and to announce to his friend that all that had been spoken of a world to come was most certainly true, and that it behooved him (De Prècy) to amend his life without delay, as he would himself be slain within a very brief period. Finding his hearer still incredulous, the Marquis exhibited a deadly wound below the breast, and immediately disappeared. The arrival of a post from Flanders confirmed the vision. The Marquis had been slain in the manner mentioned. De Prècy himself fell in the civil war, then impending.

(The speaker here cited a number of kindred examples belonging to the period, such as, in later days, have found parallels in the well-known stories of Lord Tyrone and Lady Betty Cobb, Lord Lyttleton and M. P. Andrews, Prince Dolgorouki and Apraxin, the ex-queen of Etruria and Chipanti, with a long list of similar cases, and then addressed himself to the terrestrial facts.)

It was proved by Magdalene Paret that the treasure was actually found. By the witness, Deleuil, it was traced into the possession of Auguier. By other witnesses, it was shown that Auguier had made use of many artifices to obtain the custody of the gold, cultivating a romantic attachment for this humble labourer, and seeking to inspire him with fears for his personal safety, so long as he retained possession of so large a sum. Upon the whole, unless it had been practicable to secure the attendance and oral testimony of the very phantom itself, the claim of Mirabel could hardly address itself more forcibly to the favourable judgment of the Court.

It may be that this little deficiency in the chain of evidence weighed more than was expected with the parliament of Aix. At all events, they demanded further proof; and the peasant, Bernard, was brought forward, and underwent a very rigid examination.

He stated that, on a certain day in May, Mirabel informed him that a ghost

had revealed to him the existence of some secreted treasure. That, on the following morning, they proceeded together to the spot indicated by the apparition, but found no money. That he laughed at Mirabel, snapped his fingers at the story, and went away. That he nevertheless agreed to a further search—the witness, Magdalene Paret, being present—but again found nothing. That, subsequently, Mirabel declared he had discovered eighteen pieces of gold, then twelve, finally, thirty-five, but displayed none of them. That Mirabel had, however, sent by him twenty sols to a priest, to say masses for the soul of the departed, to whom he owed so much; and that he had spoken of handing over the treasure to Auguier, and taking the latter's receipt, which certainly seemed to be the same now produced, signed "Louis Auguier."

The matter was obscure and puzzling. There was, by this time, no question that this large sum of money had, somehow, come into the possession of Mirabel. He could not, by skill or labour, have realized the hundredth part of it. No one had been robbed, for the notoriety of the case would at once have produced the loser. If Mirabel had found it (and there were the witnesses who proved the discovery many feet below the surface, in an undisturbed corner of the terrace), who revealed the precious deposit to this poor simple clown? The scale was inclining, slowly and steadily, to the spectral side, when some new and startling evidence appeared.

Auguier proved that *subsequently* to the alleged delivery of the treasure into his hands, Mirabel had declared that it was still concealed in the ground, and had invited his two brothers-in-law from Pertuis to see it. Placing them at a little distance from the haunted spot, he made pretence of digging, but suddenly raising a white shirt, which he had attached to sticks placed crosswise, he rushed towards them, crying out, "The ghost! the ghost!" One of these unlucky persons died from the impressions engendered by this piece of pleasantry. The survivor delivered this testimony.

The case now began to look less favourable for the spectre. It was hardly probable that Mirabel should take so unwarrantable a liberty with an apparition in which he believed, as to represent him, and that for no explainable purpose, by an old white shirt! Was it barely possible that Mirabel was after all a humbug, and that the whole story was a pure fabrication, for the purpose of obtaining damages from the well-to-do Auguier?

It does not appear to what astute judicial intellect this not wholly impossible idea presented itself. At all events, a new process was decreed, the great object of which was to discover in the first instance how and whence came the money into Mirabel's possession.

Under the pressure of this inquiry, the witness Paret was at length brought to confess—first, that she had never actually beheld one coin belonging to the supposed treasure: secondly, that she did not credit one word of Mirabel's story: thirdly, that if she had already deposed otherwise, it was at the entreaty of Mirabel himself. Two experts were then examined as to the alleged receipt. These differed in opinion as to its being in the handwriting of Auguier; but a third being

added to the consultation, all three finally agreed that it was a well-executed forgery.

This, after twenty months, three processes, and the examination of fifty-two witnesses, was fatal to the ghost. He was put out of court.

The final decree acquitted Auguier, and condemned Mirabel to the galleys for life, he having been previously submitted to the question. Under the torture, Mirabel confessed that one Etienne Barthélemy, a declared enemy of Auguier's, had devised the spectral fable, as a ground for the intended accusation, and, to substantiate the latter, had lent him (for exhibition) the sum of twenty thousand livres. By an after process, Barthélemy was sentenced to the galleys for life, and the witnesses Deleuil and Fournière to be hung up by the armpits, in some public place, as false witnesses.

So far as records go, this singular case was the last in which, in French law-courts, the question of ghost or no ghost was made the subject of legal argument and sworn testimony.

The Nail

NUMBER ONE

My place in the diligence was booked from Granada to Malaga, and, as the smoke-wreaths from my cigar rose and spread themselves above me, I mused, in an idle fashion, upon my unknown companions for the journey. For it is a serious affair, this chance and intimate union of people thrown together by the caprice of fortune, who may never again meet, who may wish they never had met.

My ticket bore the number 2; the third place in my compartment I learned had not been taken; but as I set my foot upon the step of the diligence, just before eleven of a dark and stormy night, I could but vainly conjecture the sex, age, and character of Number 1.

As I entered the inner darkness, I addressed an affable "Good evening" to my presumed companion, hoping thus to begin our enforced acquaintance auspiciously. No answer came. *"Diablo!"* thought I; "am I deaf or is he?" Raising my voice I repeated, still courteously, the salutation. Silence again. "Can he be dumb?" I asked myself. I felt for a seat and took it, and then the diligence started briskly under the impulse of its ten spirited horses.

Curiosity about my unseen fellow-traveler gradually deepened into awe. Fancies, too wild for repetition, began to chase each other through my ruffled imagination, spurred and shaped by fragmentary memories of tragical legends of the road. I might have lighted a cigar and so gained a momentary glimpse of the interior of my prison, but on searching my pockets I found that my match-box had been left behind. At length I determined to solve by the sense of touch what was already becoming a torturing mystery. Little by little I extended my hands, encountering nothing but the fabric of the diligence. Not until my outstretched arms were recklessly beating the corners of the compartment and my nervous fingers searching beneath the seat and among the leathern straps overhead, did the first vivid lightning-flash of the long-gathering storm reveal to me that I was alone. An hysterical laugh broke from me at the discovery, and my composure was restored. At the same moment the diligence stopped; we were at the first relief-station.

Before I could descend to make inquiry for my missing traveling companion, the door opened, and by the light of an uplifted lantern I saw a lady, young, beautiful, pale, dressed in mourning, and alone—a realization at last of many dreams indulged in these my youthful and wandering days. Her murmured "Thanks; good evening to you, señor," as I gave my hand to assist her entrance, went straight to my heart. Only to Malaga? Would that

the diligence and we had been going to Kamchatka!

We began our acquaintance with the customary travelers' talk, and separated with a declaration of love on my part. The intermediate details I pass over, save to mention my distress and perplexity at a fixed sadness which she strove in vain to conceal, and that my passionate confessions were rejected with gentleness and pity.

"That word, love, terrified me," she cried. "It is hard to inspire feelings that afflict us both. Ah! if I could cause those I meet to hate me!" Again: "It is not you I refuse, but love." Could I do aught but press my suit in the presence of this confession of esteem? Hope and illusion fled at last, when she said with suppressed emotion: "Señor, urge me no more! I have loved, loved to delirium, and have been deceived! My heart is dead." Thus we arrived and parted at Malaga; a handsome carriage, with attendants in black liveries, awaiting her at the inn.

AN AUTUMN JOURNEY

On All Souls' Day of the same year, I was journeying by a post-carriage to an important town, the seat of one of the civil divisions of Cordova, bent upon a matter of business and a month's visit to the judge of the district, a fellow-student at the university whom I had not seen for seven years. Earth and sky were gloomy, the memories of the day were melancholy, and, as I drew nearer the town, there came to my ears the mournful clamor of bells tolling the vespers of the dead. My old classmate was awaiting me at the outskirts, and rallied me upon my dejected manner and appearance. I fell in with his humor by responding that while I had not expected festival arches and a gala procession, I should have been glad of a more lively welcome from the town bells.

"Ah! Felipe," said Joaquin (for such was my classmate's baptismal name), "this passing melancholy of yours fits well my own lasting sadness. Your visit is well-timed."

"You sad?" I cried; "since when, friend of my heart?"

He strove to suppress a sigh, shrugging his shoulders, and turned the conversation to indifferent things as we walked, arm in arm, to his house.

"*Diablo!* my friend, you are well lodged," I involuntarily exclaimed, as I entered the handsome dwelling into which he ushered me. "What neatness! what taste!" I added, as my eyes gradually took in the vista of the immediate apartments. Then turning to him, I said, "Joaquin, I have tripped in my courtesy; you have a wife for whom my compliments have not been uttered; you are married, old friend, and have not told me."

"No, no," he replied in a disturbed voice, "you do our friendship an injustice; I am not married and shall never marry."

"Pardon me," I said, "that last declaration is rash and incredible, coming from one in every way qualified to command his fate in marriage. What! you, the old-time advocate of matrimony amid scoffing students, the friend that wrote but two years ago urging marriage upon myself, say this?"

"You shall have my oath, if neces-

sary," the young magistrate answered, solemnly.

"Then something very painful has happened to you," I said, taking his hand, "and you are going to tell it to me, the friend that has broken in upon the solitude of your heart, and he will see if he cannot serve you as well as listen."

His hand closed upon mine as he replied, after a brief hesitation, "Yes, you shall know all, for in truth I am very wretched, Felipe, and your sympathy will be welcome." Then more tranquilly, he added: "This afternoon the townspeople all go to the public cemetery, and I must not be absent. After your long drive, the walk there will be agreeable, and on the way I will tell you the circumstances of an event that has, I fear, blasted my life."

VACATION EXPERIENCES

An hour later Joaquin and I journeyed afoot towards the cemetery, and on the way, with occasional interruptions caused by the greetings of his fellow-townsmen, he told me the story of his grief. While serving as a king's attorney, some two years before, he had gone to Seville, to spend there his vacation of a month. At the place where he lodged was a handsome, graceful, and obviously rich young widow living alone; and though her conduct was exemplary, her origin and business in Seville were unknown. Joaquin was already deeply enamored of the lovely stranger when a chance encounter brought about a speaking acquaintance, after which their mutual liking grew rapidly. By persistently urging his superiors, he succeeded in having his leave of absence extended by two additional months, which he spent in ardent courtship. Then he arranged with his bethrothed that he should return to his post, settle his office affairs, resign his appointment, and rejoin her at Seville in a month. Their marriage was then to follow, and thereafter his future career would be such as the tastes they shared in common and her ample fortune would enable him to pursue.

He closed his business with such diligence that he was back in Seville a fortnight earlier than the appointed time, only to learn that his affianced had left the day after his own departure, without explanation of her going or information as to her return. His daily letters were there, unopened, awaiting her call for them. To his surprise and distress, no word had come to him since their parting. He spent four or five distracted days in vain inquiries, then, after some months of despair, believing himself to have been the victim of a heartless and accomplished coquette, sought new surroundings and employments in the judicial office he now held.

In broken and agitated phrases, Joaquin made plain to me how vehemently and utterly his life had been merged in that of the one who had first absorbed and then flung him away; and, whether I contemplated his own strong nature or listened to his instances of her masterful character, I perceived that here was an extraordinary woman, and a situation, alas! hopelessly past mending. Empty, indeed, were such words of comfort as I could offer as a balm to his outraged affections and wounded pride.

A MAN OF THE LAW

We entered the cemetery, a small piece of communal land sown with wooden crosses and inclosed by a low, earthen embankment—a type of many burying-places, wherein the rich and poor sleep, alike undistinguished, in the equality so dear to the feelings of the proud children of Spain. Nor do they sleep long undisturbed, for the tenancy of the graves is renewed throughout in about two years the bones of the ejected going finally to the charnel-house, after lying strewn about the cemetery till it shall please the sexton to collect and remove them.

Thus it happened that, as we walked amid these scattered relics of the dead, the eyes of the judge became fixed on a skull that attracted his attention by having some thick, black locks of a man's hair still attached to it. Stooping to examine it more closely, Joaquin started back with a cry of alarm, which I found to be caused by the presence of a large, sharp iron nail that penetrated the crown and projected through what had been the roof of the mouth. When we had somewhat regained our composure after making this startling discovery, my companion said in a low, firm voice:

"This is a call to duty; it is God that has placed before my eyes this mute witness of a crime against Him and our land, and never will I rest until the author of this horrible deed makes atonement upon the scaffold."

Joaquin went amid the throng of people in search of a notary to take the necessary depositions. Then he summoned the sexton, and by dint of much questioning, obtained the information, reluctantly given, that the grave from which the skull was taken had been prematurely opened to make place for a body which it was desired should lie in that vicinity, and that the coffin had been carried home by the sexton for such profit as could be made from its materials.

An examination of the lid revealed the initials of the late occupant, and a search of the registers of the parish churches identified the skull as that of a very rich, but ill-esteemed, proprietor who had died in the night of a stroke of apoplexy after reconciliation with his wife, who had returned to her home after living long apart from him. With extravagant demonstrations of grief over his sudden death, she had left the neighborhood, a few days after the funeral, to seek the consolations of friends in a distant and unknown part of the country. The depositions of neighbors and servants afforded all the attainable information respecting the family name of this woman, whom the murdered man had met and married in Madrid. The testimony of the unsuspecting servants made it apparent to the judge that the wife had sought and taken the opportunity to commit the crime.

After waiting the necessary time for her capture or her voluntary appearance, in pursuance of warnings and proclamations sent through the judicial department of the kingdom, Joaquin pronounced and recorded the sentence of the law upon her in her contumacious absence. Thenceforward he devoted himself to the redemption of his vow to bring the criminal to justice.

"Here is the nail," said he, pointing

to the sealed and authenticated casket in which the skull of the victim had been deposited among the archives of justice. "Heaven has revealed to us the impious hand that wielded the hammer which drove it, and doubt not, my friend, that the same just Power will, in its own time crown with success our humble efforts to bring the owner of that guilty hand to expiate his crime."

This was Joaquin himself, upright, tireless, methodical, devout; full of zeal, industry, and faith.

THE MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS

That winter I attended a great ball at the house of a rich señora in Granada, and there I encountered my Number 1 of the diligence. She received me graciously, and under the forms of polite conversation I sought to ascertain her present disposition towards me. She urged me to marriage and generously foretold the happiness that I and the lady of my choice would find in our union, but forbade me to think of herself in that relation.

"Who is that engaging woman?" I asked of a friend.

"The Señora Mercedes de Meridanueva, a South American," he replied. More than that I could learn from no one.

The following day I called upon Mercedes at her hotel. She met me with the cordiality and freedom of intimate friendship, and invited me to be her escort in a tour of the Alhambra. In that garden of nature and temple of art we spent several delightful hours. There, as we walked, I told her the story of Joaquin to which she listened with a quiet, intent interest and, after a brief silence as I finished, said:

"Señor, take the lesson to yourself, and place not your heart in the keeping of a woman you do not know."

I disclaimed the possibility of her being capable of such deceit as my classmate had suffered but she did not accept the compliment frankly. A little later, as the conversation continued in the same channel, she remarked:

"For me, there is no danger of deceiving, as I never speak thrice with the same man."

"Señora!" I exclaimed, passionately, "this is to bid me never to return."

"Not so," she answered, calmly; "it is only to inform you that I leave Granada at daybreak tomorrow, without expectation of ever seeing you again."

"You said the same at Malaga," I replied with some spirit; "yet fate, you see, has brought us together."

"Then leave it to fate! if you will; but, on my part, the adieu I now speak is eternal."

So saying, she took my hand and bent low over it in a profound salute. Thus, for the second time, we parted.

THE LIFTING OF THE CLOUD

A few days afterwards business again called me to Joaquin's neighborhood, and I made him a visit. No intelligence had been gained of the murderess, yet he expressed the utmost confidence in her capture. "For," said he, "there is a dramatic fatality in these judicial cases that rarely fails. When the bones of the slain come from the grave to bear witness and make

accusation, there is little for the tribunals to do but to carry out the formalities of the law."

Ah! Joaquin, thou mirror for upright judges!

My classmate had learned nothing, either, of the woman that had betrayed him, and I grieved to see that neither his love nor his sorrow was abated. She had told him, when he thought her heart was his, indeed, that love was the glory of a life or its hell. This conceit he repeated again and again as he confided to my sympathizing breast his ceaseless misery.

That night as we sat in his cabinet reading over his latest instructions for the pursuit of the maricide, he received a message that a lady at the Hotel de Leon earnestly solicited his immediate presence. This mysterious summons much disturbed him, but, ever responsive to the impulses of duty and kindness, he quickly decided to go, and, taking with him his pistols, departed. Two hours later he returned, pale, trembling, and almost speechless, and not until, while convulsively embracing me, he cried, "Joy, joy, my friend!" did I realize that his agitation was caused by excess of happiness. I was scarcely more tranquil as he told me that the lady who had sent for him was his Blanca, true as ever; more faithful than himself; for, returning to Seville at the lapse of the appointed month and awaiting him there till hope of his constancy had turned to despair, she had spent the months and years of anguish since in seeking him out, to learn her destiny from his own lips.

I was not satisfied with the account given me, incoherently enough, by Joaquin, but it was too evident that the acute young judge was lost in the infatuated lover; and finding that my demands for details and explanations pained him, I accepted his fond assurance and assented to his desire that I should serve as groomsman at the approaching wedding.

"The age of miracles truly has not passed from the earth," I said, incautiously, "and"—then noticing his look of distress—"Heaven has miraculously decreed that the most wretched of its children shall henceforth be happy."

A THREATENING SKY

Joaquin and I were still up and discoursing when, at two in the morning, we were startled by loud knockings at the street door. We went together to open it, when there entered, breathless from running, an officer of the district tribunal, who, as soon as he could speak, shouted, in his excitement:

"Señor, señor, the murderess, Señora Gabriela, is captured, and at this moment is safe in the prison of this illustrious town!"

Instantly upon these words my friend was again the judicial functionary, calm, emphatic, and businesslike. A few pointed inquiries revealed the fact that for quite a month the detective-officers of the civil guard had been warm upon the tracks of the fugitive, and had surprised and secured her on the very night of her arrival in this town.

"We will go at once to the prison," said the judge, "and the declarations shall be taken this night. Do you,

Señor Procurator, bid the notary attend, and also send after the sexton, that he may himself present the supreme evidences to the criminal, who will, doubtless, not deny the testimony of the iron tongue supplied by herself to the victim. Then meet us at the prison for the discharge of your proper office. You, Felipe, I designate as amanuensis, that you may assist, without breach of the law, at this assize ordained by Providence."

"Tell me," I whispered to the departing procurator, "where was this wretched woman, Gabriela, when the guards arrested her?"

"At the Hotel de Leon, señor," he replied, courteously, and passed out of the door.

I looked furtively at Joaquin, but no reflection of the horrible suspicion within my soul appeared in his serene face. I glanced about, instinctively, as the wish to escape from a terrible catastrophe took possession of me; but presently dismissed the thought as unworthy of our lifelong friendship. I resolved, also, that I would leave it to fate alone to work out events to a conclusion, and without a suggestion to the judge of my fears that the impending process would reveal three victims instead of one. How fortunate, by comparison with his wretched entanglement, appeared my unhappy love for Mercedes, who, though not for me, was a pure and unstained woman.

THE STORM BURSTS

It was nearly four o'clock in the morning when the inquisition opened in the reception-hall of the prison, profusely lighted for the occasion. All the functionaries of police and prison that could make excuse were there, and a throng of curious and favored citizens was massed about the wide-opened door. Upon a table, in front of the tribunal, was the sealed casket containing the dreadful evidence of the crime. The judge sat in the center of the tribunal, with the procurator and the captain of the guard at his right, and the notary and myself upon his left.

When all was ready, the judge tapped the bell to command order, and directed the warden to bring in the prisoner. I fixed my eyes intently upon Joaquin and saw and heard nothing in front of me. Soon I observed him turn pale, grasp his throat with one hand, as if to suppress some sound, and then look appealingly towards me. I bowed and said, "Quite true," in an ordinary tone, as if responding to some ordinary remark, at the same time contriving to place my finger upon my lips for a moment as a warning. The next instant the unhappy man sought to rise, when, behind the notary's back I uttered the words, "Señor, judge," in a voice low, but so stern as to recall him at once to his place and duty. I detected the rapid, convulsive movement by which he drew himself together, and then his face assumed the rigidity of marble. Only the burning of his eyes assured me that he lived. The man was indeed dead; what remained alive was the inflexible magistrate.

Assured as to Joaquin, I turned my gaze in the direction of the prisoner, and suddenly the room seemed to grow

dark and spin around as I saw before me—Mercedes!

When the sense of light and stability returned, my heart throbbed wildly to the wish that this woman, accused, already condemned, hopelessly enmeshed in the coils of evidence, might show her innocence and go free. I turned imploringly towards Joaquin, but his face expressed nothing, and the luster of his eyes alone told the intensity of his feelings.

Gabriela was very pale, but also very tranquil. That calmness I knew was not insensibility. Was it the self-control not unsuited to a great criminal, or could it be the serenity of a white soul? Was her trust in the strength of her cause, or the weakness of her judge? Her eyes were fastened for a time upon Joaquin. Did she seek to inspire him with courage, or to incite him to dissemble? Her look might be a silent assurance to him of her innocence, or a threat to drag him down in her fall. But the fixed impassibility of the judge moved her at length to search the faces of his companions either for sympathy or intelligence. In this way she saw me and, for a moment, her face became flushed and agitated, then, again, pale and tranquil as before.

Joaquin coming out of his stupor, asked, in a hard, husky voice:

"Prisoner, your name?"

"Gabriela Zabara de Gutierrez," answered, in a sweet, composed voice, this woman who, but a few hours before, had called herself his Blanca.

Fortunately, all were looking at Gabriela, whose soft and winning voice combined with her simple black dress to enhance the singular beauty of her face and figure. Already she was making friends among the spectators by the charm of her aspect and bearing. I was glad that none but myself saw the countenance and gesture of Joaquin as the force of this reply to his formal question fell upon him. He quickly recovered himself, and then, in a determined tone, as though he were playing all his hopes upon a single cast, he said, pointing to the black casket:

"Sexton, come forward and do your office; open up this casket."

There was profound silence as the sexton broke the seal and laid open the box.

"You, señora," continued the judge, looking fixedly at the prisoner with blazing eyes, "approach and say if you recognize the contents of this casket."

She had taken a few steps forward, when, as the sexton presented the open box towards her, she saw the dark head of a nail projecting above the white crown of the skull. She uttered one sharp, rending cry, then retreated in terror, throwing her arms wildly about and muttering, once or twice "Alfonso! Alfonso!" the name of her husband. After this, she became apparently stupefied.

"Then you recognize that nail, which caused the death of your husband?" inquired Joaquin, rising, as he spoke, as if he himself had come out of the tomb to make accusation.

"Yes, señor," responded Gabriela, in a tone and with an expression befitting an automaton.

"Do you mean by that you acknowl-

edge that you are the assassin?" asked the judge, in a voice of such anguish that the prisoner was startled and began to tremble violently.

"Señor," she cried, "I wish no longer to live, but only to speak before I die."

Joaquin fell back into his chair as one stricken, and I was terrified by the fear of what was to come. Gabriela sighed deeply, and began to speak, her voice, face, and manner adding their impressiveness to her address as she proceeded.

"I am going to confess," she said, "and in that confession must consist my defense, availing nothing against the law, but sufficient, perhaps, to shield my memory." Here she paused to bring her feelings under control, then continued: "Why should I deny the crime whereof I am accused? The living witnesses proved me alone with my husband when he so suddenly died, and the dead has come from the grave to confirm and complete the testimony. The crime was horrible; I, a woman, committed it, but it was a man that caused me to commit it!"

Amid the sensation this remark created, I looked at the judge and perceived that he shook with terror; yet he commanded his voice and courageously exclaimed:

"His name, señora; reveal instantly the name of this miserable accomplice."

The prisoner cast upon him a look of intense adoration and exclaimed, passionately:

"Never! Shall I draw him by a word into the abyss wherein for him I fall? Shall I drag him with myself to the scaffold, in order that he may not marry another? I will not. His name remains here," clasping her hands to her bosom, "for he has loved me, and I love him; yes, though he could avert my shameful death and will not."

Joaquin extended his hand as though to interrupt her, and I thought he was about to publicly accuse himself. But, with a glance of tenderness, she raised her own in protest and continued:

"Yet it is I that conquer; not he. Señor, the Nameless One," looking proudly, yet fondly, at the judge, "you have lost."

At these words, attesting her resolution to save him despite himself, Joaquin bowed his head. She went on:

"Married forcibly to a man I detested, and who became more detestable by his corrupt heart and shameful life, I spent three years of martyrdom, unhappy but resigned, when I met a man worthy of me and of whom I was then worthy. We loved, we adored each other. He did not know I was bound to another, and, in the happiness of loving and being beloved, I permitted the time to pass in which I could have informed him without incurring his reproaches for my deceit. This I could not endure, and so, on account of my weakness, infatuation, and sad situation, both of us were entangled, deeper and deeper, until at last this man, always noble and pure, told me that we must marry or part. Alas! I could do neither. How I clung to him! How I entreated him to love me and permit me to love, without imposing a condition that I assured him must, for inexplicable reasons, await Heaven's pleasure and not my own!

Had he then cast me off, I could have gone back to my hateful duty, consoled to the end of life by the memory of the love of that peerless man. But his tenderness increased the desperation of my position, while it took from me the only means of escape."

Tears and sobs were now accompanying this womanly recital of a woman's joys and griefs, and amid the general emotion, Joaquin's otherwise dangerous agitation failed to excite attention. Composing herself for what I realized to be the climax of this touching narration, Gabriela proceeded:

"I said to this man: 'My heart is forever yours beyond recall. With it you demand my hand. I am powerless —you are my fate, my destiny—my hand, also, is yours. Give me a month for affairs so sacred that not a lover, not even a husband, may know them. Then we will wed, and I shall ask you to take me so far hence that no whisper of reproach can reach me for obligations sacrificed at the altar of love.' To all this he consented, with an affection and confidence newly illustrating the exaltation of his soul. What immediately followed you all know. I usurped the function of Heaven and became its self-appointed executioner of justice upon the unworthy.

"But how swift the retribution! A fatality separated me from my lover and kept us apart, while I spent months upon months of anguish, both for my crime and my misfortune, believing myself deserted. At last accident, which had parted, reunited us, and he had but left me, to make brief preparations for our nuptials, when the tireless feet of justice overtook me, and I am here. It is the will of God, in whose presence I shall soon be; and there I will lie for ages, weeping, till He consents to recognize me as His daughter and pardon my many sins."

The prisoner's eyes and clasped hands were raised as she pronounced these closing words, and she stood as one transfixed in contemplation of the dread meeting she had prefigured, till the warden, at a sign from the judge, touched her on the shoulder and pointed to the open door. She exchanged a rapid look of tenderness with Joaquin, and directed toward me a glance that I could only interpret as one of pride. Then she walked with a firm step out of the room, and the court officer, with a haste and bustle that betrayed his anxiety to conceal his overwrought feelings, declared the audience closed.

Several days were consumed in the formalities of drawing up the entire process for the inspection of the revising tribunal at Seville, and what Joaquin suffered during this interval, I shall not attempt to describe. But the magistrate triumphed over the man, and when all was complete but the record of condemnation, he presided at another audience, and the prisoner was brought before him, he pronounced anew, in the customary manner, the sentence of death upon her, without external manifestation of feeling by either of the unhappy pair. I carried the process to Seville, and, at his request, came back without delay to Joaquin.

"I am going away," he said. "Await my return here. Do not ask me where

I am going, and do not look so at me, for I assure you I meditate nothing rash. Care for the unhappy one, but do not visit her; that would be humiliation. Good-by till I am here again to thank you for the friendship that would share my afflictions."

"Do not visit her"; "that would be humiliation"; "the friendship that would share my afflictions," I repeated after he had gone. True, I had indeed the burden of his afflictions, but who was there to do the like office for me? Thank heaven! not Joaquin.

EXPIATION

Within three weeks the confirmation of the sentence was certified from the higher court, and the condemned placed in preparation for death.

The day of execution arrived. Not a word had been heard from Joaquin. A great, but orderly, crowd was in attendance, massed closely about the detachment of civil guards formed in a square around the scaffold.

As the bell began to toll, the official procession came from the court of the prison. Could this white-faced, wasted figure, attenuated to a shadow within the folds of her black costume, tottering without the assistance she refused, and barely able to support the ivory crucifix she held to her lips, be Gabriela?

"Why did you not tell me of her intensity of suffering?" I demanded of the warden.

"Ah, señor! I thought to spare you," he replied sorrowfully, "for neither I nor the surgeon expected her to see this day."

I moved to the side of the prisoner. "Señora," I said, "is there any service that friendship can render to consecrate its recollections of happier days?"

"Thank you," she answered, "this is indeed true kindness. Father," addressing herself to the priest beside her, "may I speak a moment with this gentleman?"

"Yes, my child; but cease not to think upon God."

"Tell him," she said to me, "my last thought was of him; my last word, his name; his image, my last earthly vision; my last hope, that in eternity we should meet again. May he be happy; so happy as to forget me. And you, señor and generous friend, forsake not that noble man, nor ever prove unworthy of his affection. Farewell!"

I could not speak. I bent my head and raised her bound and transparent hands tenderly and reverently to my lips, and as I sought for some place of seclusion I was conscious of seeing her begin the ascent of the scaffold. Then, in how long a time I know not, I heard sounds of commotion, which formed themselves at length into shouts of "Pardon! Pardon!"

I hastened back to the scene, and there came Joaquin, on a furiously galloping horse, waving his handkerchief to those on the scaffold. The warden hastened down to meet him, and receiving from his hand a large packet, opened it, and after rapidly scanning its content, handed it to the commandant of police, who made proclamation of the gracious clemency of the king upon the representation of the esteemed judge of the district. These formalities completed Joaquin passed rapidly up the steps of the scaffold,

that he might himself unbind the hands of the woman he had rescued. She lay, apparently in a swoon, her head supported by the confessor. There she died, as though Heaven had decreed that she should redress her crime before man, as already she had in the sight of God. She revived sufficiently, as she passed away, to recognize her lover, to feebly press his hand, and to murmur some unintelligible words of which his heart needed no interpretation.

THE PEACE OF GOD

Six months after the death of Gabriela, I stood on the deck of a vessel at Cadiz, to bid adieu to Joaquin, who was going, under a judicial appointment, to a distant colony, there to exemplify and exercise those virtues and talents which the motherland but reluctantly spared, and would have been glad to recognize by advancement to exalted station. Since then we have never met nor have we ever parted. Time and industry have brought him peace, and though his life has been diverted by the great tragedy that crossed its path, it has not been wasted. Only the weak and unfaithful pass their clouded days in unfruitful despair. Wifeless and childless, Joaquin has been the spouse of the virtuous, the father of the distressed.

See, in this velvet box I keep the nail that pierced the head of Don Alfonso, the soul of Gabriela, and the heart of my friend.

I married? No. "Had not the nail a fourth victim?" you ask. Again I answer, no; for I cannot be untrue to Joaquin by imposing my griefs upon the resting-place of his own. Here is the box; fate has charged me with the custody of the relic within it, consecrated by suffering, and the woman has not appeared with whom I have been willing to divide the sacred charge. Therefore I have remained unwed.

The Detective

THE "Bleeding Heart Tavern" was situated on the Champs Elysées, near the Cours la Reine, in one of the vast moats which bounded this promenade some years since. The inhabitants of the island had not yet appeared. Since the departure of Bradamanti, who had accompanied the step-mother of Madame d'Harville to Normandy, Tortillard had returned to his father's house.

Placed as lookout on the top of the staircase leading down to the inn, the little cripple was to notify the arrival of the Martials by a concerted signal, Bras-Rouge being then in secret conference with Narcisse Borel, a police-officer.

This man, about forty years, strong

and thickset, had his skin stained, a sharp and piercing eye, and face completely shaved, so as to be able to assume the different disguises necessary to his dangerous expeditions; for it was often necessary for him to unite the sudden transformations of a comedian with the energy and courage of the soldier, to surprise certain bandits whom he was obliged to match in courage and determination. Narcisse Borel was, in a word, one of the most useful, the most active instruments of the providence, on a small scale, modestly and vulgarly called the police.

Let us return to the interview between Borel and Bras-Rouge. Their conversation seemed very animated.

"Yes," said the plain-clothes constable, "you are accused of profiting by your position in a double manner, by taking part with impunity in the robberies of a band of very dangerous malefactors, and of giving false information concerning them to the police. Take care, Bras-Rouge; if this should be proved, they would have no mercy on you."

"Alas! I know I am accused of this; and it is afflicting, my good M. Narcisse," replied Bras-Rouge, giving to his weasel face an expression of hypocritical sorrow. "But I hope that to-day they will render me justice, and that my good faith will be certainly acknowledged."

"We shall see."

"How can I be suspected? Have I not given proofs? Was it not I—yes or no—who, in time past secured you Ambrose Martial, one of the most dangerous malefactors in Paris? For, as it is said, that runs in his race, and the Martials come from below, where they will soon return."

"All this is very fine; but Ambrose was informed that he was about to be arrested; if I had not advanced the hour indicated by you, he would have escaped."

"Do you believe me capable, M. Narcisse, of having secretly given him information of your intentions?"

"All I know is, that I received a pistol shot from the rascal, which, very fortunately, only went through my arm."

"Marry! M. Narcisse, it is very certain that in your calling one is exposed to such mistakes."

"Oh! you call that a mistake?"

"Certainly; for doubtless the scoundrel wanted to plant the ball in your body."

"In the arms, body, or head, no matter; it is not of that I complain; every trade has its offsets."

"And its pleasures also, M. Narcisse; and its pleasures! For instance, when a man as cunning, as adroit, as courageous as you are, is for a long time on the tracks of a nest of robbers; follows them from place to place—from house to house, with a good bloodhound like your servant Bras-Rouge, and he succeeds in getting them into a trap rom which not one can escape, acknowledge, M. Narcisse, that there is great pleasure in it—a huntsman's joy—without counting the service rendered to justice," added the landlord of the "Bleeding Heart."

"I should be of your opinion, if the bloodhound was faithful, but I am afraid he is not."

"Oh! M. Narcisse, can you think——"

"I think that instead of putting us on the scent, you amuse yourself by

deceiving us, and you abuse the confidence placed in you. Every day you promise to aid us to place our hands on the band; that day never comes."

"What if this day comes to-day, M. Narcisse, as I am sure it will; and if I let you pick up Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, the widow, her daughter, and La Chouette, will it be a good haul or not? Will you suspect me?"

"No; and you will have rendered real service; for we have against this band strong presumptions, almost certain suspicions, but, unfortunately, no proofs."

"Hold a moment—caught in the very act, allowing you to nab them so, will aid furiously to display their cards, M. Narcisse?"

"Doubtless; and you assure me you are not in the plan they have on hand?"

"No, on my honor. It is La Chouette who came and proposed to me to entice the broker here, when she learned through my son that Morel, the lapidary, who lived in the Rue du Temple, cut real instead of false stones, and that Mother Mathieu had often about her jewels of value. I accepted the affair, proposing for La Chouette to add Barbillon and the Martials, so as to have the whole gang in hand."

"And what of the Schoolmaster, this man so dangerous, so strong, and so ferocious, who was always with La Chouette? one of the old hands of the Lapin Blanc?"

"The Schoolmaster?" said Bras-Rouge, feigning astonishment.

"Yes, a galley-slave escaped from Rochefort, named Anselme Duresnel, condemned for life. He has disfigured himself so as not to be recognised. Have you no information of him?"

"None," answered Bras-Rouge, intrepidly, who had his reasons for this falsehood, for the Schoolmaster was then shut up in one of the cellars of the tavern.

"There is every reason to believe that the Schoolmaster is the author of some late murders. It would be an important capture. For six weeks past, no one knows what has become of him."

"Thus we are reproached for having lost sight of him. Always reproaches, M. Narcisse! always."

"Not without reason. How's your smuggling?"

"Must I not know all sorts of folks, smugglers as well as anybody else, to put you on the scent? I informed you of the pipe which, beginning outside of the Barrière du Trône, ended in a house in the street, to introduce untaxed liquor."

"I know all that," said Narcisse, interrupting Bras-Rouge; "but for one you denounce, you let, perhaps, ten escape, and you continue your trade with impunity. I am sure you feed out of two mangers, as the saying is."

"Oh! M. Narcisse, I am incapable of such dishonest hunger."

"And this is not all. In the Rue du Temple, No. 17, lives one Burette, pawnbroker, who is accused of being your private receiver."

"What would you have me do, M. Borel? one says so many things, the world is so wicked. Once more I say, I must mix with the greatest number of scoundrels possible. I must even do as they do, worse than they, to avoid suspicions; but it cuts me to the heart to imitate them—to the heart—I must be well devoted to the service to follow such a trade."

"Poor dear man! I pity you with all my heart."

"You laugh, M. Borel. But if all these stories are believed, why do they not pay Mother Burette and myself a visit?"

"You know well why—not to startle these bandits whom you have for so long a time promised to deliver to us."

"And I am going to deliver them to you, M. Narcisse; in one hour's time you shall have them bound, and without much trouble, for there are three women. Barbillon and Nicholas Martial are as ferocious as tigers, but cowardly as chickens."

"Tigers or chickens," said Borel, opening his long riding coat and showing the butt-ends of two pistols, which stuck out of his trousers pockets, "I have something here to serve them."

"You will do well to take two of your men with you, M. Borel; when they find themselves cornered, the greatest cowards become sometimes tigers."

"I will place two of my men in the little lower room, alongside of the one where you will put the broker. At the first cry, I will appear at one door, my two men at the other."

"You must make haste, for the band may arrive any moment, M. Borel."

"So be it; I go to place my men. I hope it will not be for nothing this time."

The conversation was interrupted by the concerted signal. Bras-Rouge looked out of a window to see whom Tortillard announced.

"Look! here is La Chouette, already! Well! do you believe me now, M. Narcisse?"

"This is something, but not all; we shall see. I go to place my men."

The detective disappeared through a side door.

Her rapidity of step, the ferocious ardor of a desire for rapine and murder which she still possessed, had flushed her hideous visage; her one green eye sparkled with savage joy.

Tortillard followed her, jumping and limping. Just as she was descending the last steps of the stairs, the son of Bras-Rouge, through a wicked frolic, placed his foot on the trailing folds of La Chouette's dress. This caused the old woman to stumble; not being able to catch hold of the balusters, she fell on her knees, her hands both stretched out, abandoning her precious basket, from whence escaped a golden bracelet set with diamonds and fine pearls. La Chouette, having, in her fall, excoriated her fingers a little, picked up the bracelet, which had not escaped the quick eyesight of Tortillard, rose and threw herself furiously on the little cripple, who approached her with a hypocritical air, saying, "Oh! bless us! your foot slipped!"

Without answering La Chouette seized him by the hair, and, stooping down, bit him in the cheek; the blood spurted from the wound. Strange as it may appear, Tortillard notwithstanding his wickedness, and the great pain he endured, uttered not a complaint nor cry. He wiped his bleeding face, and said, with a forced laugh:

"I would rather you would not kiss me so hard another time, La Chouette."

"Wicked little devil, why did you step on my gown to make me fall?"

"I? Oh, now! I swear to you that I did not do it on purpose, my good Chouette; as if your little Tortillard would wish to hurt you; he loves you

too well for that. You did well to beat him, affront him, bite him; he is attached to you like a poor little dog to his master," said the child in a caressing and coaxing voice.

Deceived by the hypocrisy, La Chouette answered, "Very well! if I have bitten you wrongfully, it shall be punishment for some other time, when you have deserved it. Come, to-day I bear no malice. Where is your cheat of a father?"

"In the house; shall I call him?"

"No; have the Martials come yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then I have time to go and see my man; I want to speak to old No-eyes."

"Are you going to the cellar?" asked Tortillard, hardly concealing his diabolical joy.

"What is that to you?"

"To me?"

"Yes; you asked me that in such a droll way."

"Because I thought of something funny."

"What?"

"That you must have brought a pack of cards along to amuse him," answered Tortillard, in a cunning manner; "it will be a little change for him; he only plays at biting with the rats; in that game he always wins, and in the end it tires him."

La Chouette laughed violently at this witticism, and said to the little cripple, "Mamma's little monkey. I do not know a blackguard that is more wicked than you are. You little rogue, go, get me a candle; you shall light me down, help me to open his door; you know that I can't move it alone."

"Oh, no, it is too dark in the cellar," said Tortillard, shaking his head.

"How? you, as wicked as the devil, a coward; I would like to see that! Come, go quick, and say to your father, I will soon return; that I am with my pet; that we are talking about the publication of our bans of marriage," added the monster, chuckling. "Come, make haste, you shall be groomsman, and if you are a good boy, you shall have my garter."

Tortillard went to get a light, and La Chouette, elated with the success of her robbery, amused herself while he was gone in handling the precious jewels in her basket. It was to conceal temporarily this treasure that she wished to visit the Schoolmaster in his cellar, and not to torment, as was her usual custom, her victim. We will mention presently why, with the consent of Bras-Rouge, La Chouette had confined the Schoolmaster in the subterranean hole.

Tortillard, holding a light, reappeared at the cellar door. La Chouette followed him to the lower room, into which opened the large trap-door already described.

The son of Bras-Rouge, protecting his light with the hollow of his hand, and preceding the old woman, descended slowly a flight of steep steps, leading to the entrance of the cellar.

Arrived at the foot, Tortillard appeared to hesitate about following La Chouette.

"Well! lazybones, go on," said she, turning round.

"It is so dark, and besides, you go so fast, La Chouette; I'd rather go back, and leave you the candle."

"And the door, imbecile? Can I open it alone! Will you go on?"

"No, I am too much afraid."

"If I come to you, take care."

"Oh, now you threaten me, I'll go back."

And he retreated a few steps.

"Well! listen; be a good boy," answered La Chouette, restraining her anger, "I will give you something."

"Very well," said the boy, drawing near, "speak so to me, and you will make me do all you can wish, Mother Chouette."

"Look alive, I am in a hurry."

"Yes, but promise that you will let me torment the Schoolmaster."

"Some other day; now I have no time."

"Only a little; just to make him foam."

"Some other time, I say; I must return at once."

"Why, then, do you open the door of his prison?'

"None of your business. Come, now, will you finish? The Martials, perhaps, are already above; I want to speak to them. Be a good boy, and you sha'n't be sorry; go on."

"I must love you well, La Chouette, for you can make me do just as you please," said Tortillard, advancing slowly. The trembling, sickly light of the candle, only made darkness visible in this gloomy passage, reflecting the black shadow of the hideous boy on the green and crumbling walls streaming with humidity.

At the end of the passage, through the obscurity, could be perceived the low, broken arch of the entrance to the cellar, its heavy door secured with bands of iron, and contrasting strongly in the shade with the plaid shawl and white bonnet of La Chouette.

With their united efforts, the door opened, creaking, on its rusty hinges. A puff of humid vapor escaped from this hole, which was as dark as night.

The candle, placed on the ground, cast a ray of light on the first steps of the stone staircase, while the lower part was lost in total obscurity.

A cry, or rather a savage howl, came up from the depths of the cellar.

"Oh, there is my darling, who says 'good-day' to his mamma," said La Chouette, ironically; and she descended a few steps to conceal her prize in some corner.

"I am hungry!" cried the Schoolmaster, in a voice trembling with rage; "do you mean I am to die here like a mad beast?"

"You are hungry, poor puss!" said La Chouette, shouting with laughter. "Well, suck your thumb!"

The noise of a chain shaken violently was heard; then a sigh of restrained rage.

"Take care! take care! you will hurt your leg, poor dear papa!" said Tortillard.

"The child is right; keep quiet, old pal," said the old woman; "the chain and rings are strong, old No-eyes; they come from old Micou, who only sells first rate articles. It is your own fault; for why did you allow yourself to be tied when you were asleep? Afterward there was nothing to be done, but to slip on the chain, and bring you down here, in this nice cool place, to preserve you, my sweet!"

"It's a shame—he'll grow mouldy," said Tortillard.

The chains were heard rattling anew.

"Oh, oh! he jumps like a ladybird, tied by the paw," cried the old woman. "I think I can see him."

"Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home!

your house is on fire, and the Schoolmaster is burning!" chanted Tortillard.

This variation augmented the hilarity of La Chouette. Having placed her basket in a hole under one of the steps, she said, "Look here, my man."

"He does not see," answered Tortillard.

"The boy is right. Ah, well! Do you hear? You should not have hindered me, when we returned from the farm, from washing Pegriotte's face with vitriol. You should not have played the good dog, simpleton. And then, to talk of your conscience, which was becoming prudish. I saw that your cake was all dough; that some day or other you might peach, Mister Eyeless, and then——"

"Old No-eyes will nip you, Screech-Owl, for he is hungry," cried Tortillard, suddenly, pushing, with all his strength, the old woman by the back.

La Chouette fell forward, uttering a dreadful imprecation, and rolled to the foot of the steps.

"Lick 'em, Towser! La Chouette is yours! Jump on her, old man," added Tortillard.

Then, seizing hold of the basket, which he had seen the old woman hide, he ran up the stairs precipitately, crying with savage joy, "There is a push worth double what I gave you a while ago, La Chouette! This time you can't bite me. Oh! you thought I didn't care; thank you, I bleed still."

"I have her, oh, I have her!" cried the Schoolmaster from the depths of the cellar.

"If you have her, old man, fair play," said the boy, chuckling, as he stopped on the top step of the staircase.

"Help!" cried La Chouette, in a strangled voice.

"Thank you, Tortillard," answered the Schoolmaster; "thank you," and he uttered an aspiration of fearful joy. "Oh! I pardon you the harm you have done me, and to reward you, you shall hear La Chouette sing! Listen to the bird of death——"

"Bravo, bravo! here am I in the dress circle, private box," said Tortillard, seating himself at the top of the stairs. He raised the light to endeavor to see what was going on in the cellar, but the darkness was too great; so faint a light could not dissipate it. Bras-Rouge's hopeful could distinguish nothing. The struggle between the Schoolmaster and La Chouette was silent and furious, without a word, without a cry. Only, from time to time, could be heard a hard breathing or suffocating respiration, which always accompanies violent and continued struggles.

Tortillard, seated on the stone step, began to stamp his feet in the manner peculiar to spectators anxious for the commencement of a play; then he uttered the familiar cry of the "gods" in the penny-gaffs. "Hoist that rag! trot 'em out! Begin, begin! Music, music!"

"Oh, I have you as I wish," murmured the Schoolmaster from the bottom of the cellar, "and you shall——"

A desperate movement of La Chouette interrupted him. She struggled with that energy which is caused by the fear of death.

"Speak up, we can't hear," cried Tortillard.

"You have a fine chance in my hand. I have you as I wish to have you," continued the Schoolmaster. Then, having doubtless succeeded in holding La

Chouette, he added, "That's it. Now listen——"

"Tortillard, call your father!" cried La Chouette, in a breathless, exhausted tone. "Help, help!"

"Turn out that old woman! turn her out! We can't hear," said the little cripple, screaming with laughter. "Silence! out with her!"

The cries of La Chouette could not reach the upper apartments. The wretch, seeing she had no aid to expect from the son of Bras-Rouge, tried a last effort.

"Tortillard, go for help; and I will give you my basket, it is full of jewels. It is there under a stone."

"How generous you are! Thank you, ma'am! Don't you know that I have your swag? Hold, don't you hear it jingle?" said Tortillard shaking it. "But give me two sous to buy some hot cake and I'll go seek papa."

"Have pity on me, and I——" La Chouette could not proceed. Again there was a pause.

The little cripple recommenced the stamping of his feet, and cried, "Why don't you begin? Up with the curtain! Go ahead, will you, now? Music, music!"

"La Chouette, you can no longer deafen me with your cries," said the Schoolmaster, after some minutes, during which he had succeeded in gagging the old woman. "You know well," resumed he, in a slow and hollow tone, "that I do not wish to finish you at once. Torture for torture. You have made me suffer enough. I must talk to you a long time before I kill you —yes, a long time. It will be frightful for you! What agony!"

"Come, none of your nonsense, old man," cried Tortillard, half rising. "Correct her; but do not hurt her. You speak of killing her; it's only a joke, is it not! I like my Chouette. I have lent her to you, but you must return her to me. Don't damage her. I will not have any one harm my Chouette, or I will go and call papa."

"Be not alarmed; she shall only have what she deserves—a profitable lesson," said the robber, to reassure Tortillard, fearing that the cripple would go for help.

"Very good! bravo! Now the play begins," said the boy, who did not believe that the Schoolmaster seriously meditated to destroy La Chouette.

"Let us talk a little," resumed the Schoolmaster, in a calm voice, to the old woman. "In the first place, since a dream I had at the farm of Bouqueval, which brought before my eyes all our crimes, which almost made me mad, which will make me mad—for in the solitude and profound state of isolation in which I live, all my thoughts, in spite of myself, tend toward this dream—a strange change has taken place within me. Yes, I have thought with horror of my past wickedness. In the first place, I did not allow you to disfigure the Goualeuse. That was nothing. By chaining me here in this cave, by making me suffer cold and hunger, but by delivering me from your provocation, you have left me alone to all the horrors of my thoughts. Oh! you do not know what it is to be alone, always alone, with a black veil over the eyes, as the implacable man said who punished me." (This was Rudolph who had had him blinded.) "It is fearful! See now! In this cellar I wished to kill him, but this cellar is the place

of my punishment. It will be perhaps my grave!

"I repeat to you, this is frightful. All that man predicted is realized. He told me: 'You have abused your strength: you shall be the plaything of the weakest.' This has been. He told me: 'Henceforth, separated from the exterior world, face to face with the eternal remembrance of your crimes, one day you will repent them.' That day has arrived; solitude has confirmed it. I could not have thought it possible. Another proof that I am, perhaps, less wicked than formerly, is, that I experience an indescribable joy in holding you there, monster, not to avenge myself, but to avenge our victims. Yes, I shall have accomplished a duty, when, with my own hand, I shall have punished my accomplice. A voice tells me, that if you had fallen sooner into my power, much blood might have been spared. I feel now a horror of my past murders, and yet, strange! it is without fear, it is with security that I intend to execute on you a frightful murder, with horrible refinement of cruelty. Speak, speak! can you realize this?"

"Bravo, bravo! well played, first old man. You warm up," cried Tortillard, applauding. "This is only a joke, though?"

"Only a joke?" answered the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice. "Be still, La Chouette; I must finish explaining to you how, little by little, I came to repent. This revelation will be odious to you, heart of iron, and it will also prove to you how merciless I ought to be in the vengeance I wish to exercise on you in the name of our victims. I must hurry on. The joy of having you thus makes my blood run wild, my head throb with violence, as when I think of my dream. My mind wanders; perhaps one of my attacks is coming on; but I shall have time to render the approaches of death more frightful, in forcing you to hear me."

"Bold, La Chouette!" cried Tortillard; "be bold with your answer. Don't you know your part? Come, tell the devil to prompt you, my old dear."

"Oh! you do well to struggle and bite," said the Schoolmaster, after a pause; "you shall not escape; you have cut my fingers to the bone, but I will tear your tongue out if you stir. Let us continue to converse.

"On finding myself alone—constantly alone in obscurity and silence—I began to have fits of furious rage; powerless, for the first time I lost my senses, my head wandered. Yes, although awake, I have dreamed the dream you know; the dream of the old man in the Rue de Roule—the woman drowned—the drover—all murdered! and you, soaring above all these phantoms! I tell you, it is frightful. I am blind; yet my thoughts assume a form, a body, and represent continually to me in a visible manner, almost palpable, the features of my victims.

"I should not have this fearful dream, but that my mind, continually absorbed by the recollection of my past crimes, is troubled with the same visions.

"Doubtless, when one is deprived of sight, besetting ideas trace themselves almost materially on the brain. Yet, sometime, by force of contemplating them with resigned alarm, it seems to me that these menacing specters have pity on me; they grow dim, fade away,

and disappear. Then I think I awake from a vivid dream; but I feel myself weak, exhausted, broken, and, will you believe it—oh! how you will laugh, La Chouette—I weep—do you hear? I weep. You do not laugh? But laugh! I say, laugh." La Chouette uttered a stifled groan.

"Louder," cried Tortillard, "we can't hear."

"Yes," continued the Schoolmaster, "I wept, for I suffered, and rage is fruitless. I say to myself, to-morrow, and to-morrow, forever I shall be a prey to the same delirium, the same mournful desolation. What a life! oh, what a life! Better I had chosen death, than to be interred alive in this abyss, which incessantly racks my thoughts! Blind, solitary, and a prisoner! what can distract my thoughts? Nothing—nothing.

"When the phantoms cease for a moment to pass and repass on the black veil which I have before my eyes, there are other tortures—there are overwhelming comparisons. I say to myself, 'if I had remained an honest man, at this moment I should be free, tranquil, happy, loved, and honored by mine own, instead of being blind and chained in this dungeon, at the mercy of my accomplices."

"Alas! the regret of happiness, lost by crime, is the first step toward repentance. And when to this repentance is added an expiation of frightful severity—an expiation which changes life into a long sleep filled with avenging hallucinations of desperate reflections, perhaps then the pardon of man will follow remorse and expiation."

"Take care, old man!" cried Tortillard; "you are cutting into the parson's part! Found out, found out!"

The Schoolmaster paid no attention. "Does it astonish you to hear me talk thus, La Chouette? If I had continued to harden myself, either by other bloody misdeeds, or by the savage drunkenness of a galley-slave's life, this salutary change in me had never taken place, I know well. But alone—blind—and tortured with a visible remorse, what could I think of? New crimes—how commit them? An escape—how escape? And if I escaped, where should I go—what should I do with my liberty? No; I must henceforth live in eternal night, between the anguish of repentance, and the alarm of horrifying apparitions by which I am pursued. Yet sometimes a feeble ray of hope shines in the midst of the gloom—a moment of calm succeeds to my torments: yes, for sometimes I succeed in conjuring the specters which besiege me, by opposing to them the recollections of a past life, honest and peaceful—by carrying back my thoughts to the days of my childhood.

"Happily, you see the blackest villains have had, at least, some years of peace and innocence to offer in opposition to their long years of crime and blood. We are not born wicked.

"The most perverse have had the amiable simplicity of childhood—have known the sweet joys of that charming age. So, I repeat, sometimes I feel a bitter consolation in saying, 'Though I am at this moment the object of universal execration, there was a time when I was beloved and cherished, because I was inoffensive and good.'

"Alas! I must take refuge in the past, when I can; there alone can I find any repose."

On pronouncing these last words, the

voice of the Schoolmaster had lost its roughness; the formidable man seemed profoundly affected; he went on: "Now, you see, the salutary influence of these thoughts is such that my rage is appeased; courage, strength, the will, all fail me to punish you; no, it is not for me to shed your blood."

"Bravo, old one! Now you see, La Chouette, that it was only a joke," cried Tortillard, applauding.

"No, it is not for me to shed your blood," resumed the Schoolmaster; "it would be a murder—excusable, perhaps, but still a murder; and I have enough with three specters! And then, who knows, you, even you! will repent some day."

Speaking thus, he mechanically relaxed his grasp.

La Chouette profited by it to seize hold of the dagger, which she had placed in her bosom, after the murder of the countess, and to strike a violent blow with it in order to disembarrass herself of him altogether.

He uttered a cry of great anguish. The savage frenzy of his rage, vengeance, and hatred, his sanguinary instincts suddenly aroused, and exasperated at this attack, made an unexpected and terrible explosion, under which his reason sunk, already much shattered by so many trials.

"Ah! viper, I felt your tooth!" cried he, in a voice trembling with rage, and tightly grasping La Chouette, who had thought to escape. "You crawl in the cellar," added he, more and more wandering, "but I am going to crush you, Screech-Owl. You waited, doubtless, the coming of the phantoms; my ears tingle, my head turns, as when they are about to come. Yes, I am not deceived. Oh! there they are; out of the darkness they approach—they approach! How pale they are, yet their blood, how it flows, red and smoking. They frighten you—you struggle. Oh, well! be tranquil, you shall not see them; I have pity on you; I shall make you blind. You shall be like me, without eyes!" Here he paused.

La Chouette uttered a yell so horrible that Tortillard, alarmed, jumped from his seat, and stood erect.

The frightful screams of La Chouette seemed to increase the insanity of the Schoolmaster.

"Sing," said he, in a low voice, "sing, La Chouette, sing your song of death. You are happy; you will never more see the phantoms of our victims; the old man of the Rue de la Roule, the drowned woman, the drover. But I see them, they come; they touch me. Oh! how cold they are, oh!"

The last spark of intelligence in this poor wretch was extinguished in this cry of horror. Then he reasoned no more, spoke not; he behaved and roared like a wild beast: he only obeyed the savage instinct of destruction for destruction's sake. Horrible, frightful events took place in the gloom of the cellar.

A quick, rapid tramping was heard, interrupted at frequent intervals by a dull sound, like that of a bag of bones which rebounded on a stone against which one wished to break it. Acute moans, and bursts of infernal laughter, accompanied each of these blows. Then there was a death-rattle of agony. Then nothing could be heard but the furious trampling; nothing but the heavy and rebounding blows, which still continued.

Soon a distant noise of footsteps and

voices reached even to the depths of the cellar. Numerous lights appeared at the extremity of the subterranean passage. Tortillard, frozen with terror by the frightful tragedy which he had heard, but not seen, perceived several persons rapidly descend the staircase. In a moment, the cellar was invaded by several police officers, at the head of whom was Narcisse Borel; municipal guards closed the march. Tortillard was seized on the upper steps of the cellar, holding still in his hand La Chouette's basket.

Narcisse Borel, followed by some of his men, descended into the cellar. All stopped, struck with such a horrible spectacle. Chained by the leg to an enormous stone placed in the middle of the dungeon, the Schoolmaster, horrible, monstrous, his hair knotted, his beard long, his mouth foaming, clothed with bloody rags, turned like a wild beast around his dungeon, dragging after him, by the feet, the corpse of La Chouette, whose head was horribly mutilated, broken, and crushed. It needed a violent struggle to take from him the bleeding remains of his accomplice, and to secure him.

After a vigorous resistance, they succeeded in transporting him to the lower room of the tavern, a dull, gloomy apartment, lighted by a single window. There were found, handcuffed and guarded, Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, his mother and sister. They had been arrested just at the moment they were dragging off the diamond broker to murder her. She was recovering in another room. Stretched on the ground, and held, with great difficulty, by two officers, the Schoolmaster, slightly wounded in the arm by La Chouette, but completely insensible, roared and bellowed like a baited bull. At times he almost raised himself from the earth by his convulsive movements.

Barbillon, with lowered head, livid face, discolored lips, fixed and savage eye, his long black hair falling on the collar of his blouse, torn in the struggle, was seated on a bench; his arms, confined by handcuffs, rested on his knees. The juvenile appearance of this scoundrel (he was hardly eighteen), and the regularity of his features, rendered still more deplorable the hideous stamp with which debauchery and crime had marked his countenance. Unmoved, he said not a word. This apparent insensibility was due to stupidity or to a frigid energy; his breathing was rapid, and from time to time, with his shackled hands, he wiped the sweat from his pale forehead.

Alongside of him was placed Calabash; her cap had been torn, her yellowish hair, tied behind with a string, hung down her back in many tangled and disordered tresses. More enraged than dispirited, her thin and jaundiced cheeks somewhat colored, she regarded with disdain the affliction of her brother Nicholas, placed on a chair opposite.

Foreseeing the fate which awaited him, this bandit, sinking within himself, his head hanging, his knees trembling, was almost dead with affright; his teeth chattered convulsively, and he uttered low and mournful groans. Alone, among all, the widow, standing with her back to the wall, had lost nothing of her audacity. With her head erect, she cast a firm look around her. Her mask of bronze betrayed not the slightest emotion. Yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, who was brought into the

lower room, after having assisted in the minute search which the commissary had just made throughout the whole house —yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, we repeat, the features of the widow contracted in spite of herself; her small eyes, ordinarily dull, sparkled with rage; her compressed lips became bloodless: she stiffened her manacled hands. Then, as if she had regretted this mute manifestation of rage and impotent hatred, she conquered her emotion, and became of icy calmness.

While the commissary drew up his report, Narcisse Borel, rubbing his hands, cast a complacent look on the important capture he had just made, which delivered Paris from a band of dangerous criminals; but feeling of what utility Bras-Rouge had been in this expedition, he could not help expressing to him by a glance his gratitude.

The father of Tortillard was obliged to partake, until after their judgment, the prison and fate of those whom he had denounced; like them, he wore handcuffs; still more than them, he had a trembling, alarmed air, uttering sorrowful groans, and giving to his weasel face every expression of terror. He embraced Tortillard, as if he sought some consolation in these paternal caresses.

The little cripple showed but little sensibility at these proofs of tenderness; he had just learned that, until further orders, he was to be sent to the prison for young offenders.

"What a misfortune to part with my darling son!" cried Bras-Rouge, feigning to weep; "it is we who are the most unfortunate, Ma'am Martial, for they separate us from our children."

The widow could no longer contain herself; not doubting the treason of Bras-Rouge, which she had prophesied, she cried, "I was sure that you sold my son who is at Toulon. There, Judas!" and she spat in his face. "You sell our heads; so be it; they will see handsome corpses—corpses of the real Martials!"

"Yes; we will not budge before the scaffold," added Calabash, with savage pride.

The widow, pointing to Nicholas with a withering glance of contempt, said to her daughter, "This coward will dishonor us on the scaffold!"

Some moments afterward, the widow and Calabash, accompanied by two police, were placed in a cab and sent to Saint Lazare. The three men were conducted to La Force. The Schoolmaster was transported to the depot of the Conciergerie, where there are cells destined to receive temporarily the insane.

El Conde Lucanor

On one occasion, Count Lucanor, talking to his counsellor Patronio, said in this manner:—"Patronio! I, and a number of other people, being engaged in conversing together, the question was asked, in what way could a bad man contrive to do most mischief in the world, not only to one, but to every body? To which some replied, that it could but be done by turning rebel and traitor,—others, by a man becoming a constant evil doer,—and a third part, by his evil speaking, and robbing men, not merely of their property, but of their good name. Now, as a man of understanding, I ask of you to inform me as to which of these evil courses would most likely produce greater mischief to other people." "Señor Conde," replied Patronio, "in order to shew you thus much, I would that you were informed of that which happened to the Devil with regard to a strange, wicked woman of these parts." The Count then enquired how that might have come to pass?

THE HISTORY

"Señor Conde," said Patronio, "in a certain village there lived a very good kind of man, who had a wife; and these two were for the once so well assorted, that never had there arisen between them the least difference. But as you know that this same Devil ever feels a cruel despite on beholding good things, or things going on at all well, he felt no little chagrin, and spent much time in trying every device he could to put them by the ears together;—yet he could not succeed; and one day, returning very melancholy from their house, after another, and another failure, he fell in with a wicked strange woman. After saluting each other, she enquired of the Devil as to what had made him look so sad, and he acquainted her with the cause,—the length of time, and the number of attempts, all directed to make discord between this man and woman, and to no end;—for which reason he might, he said, well look serious and unhappy. The strange woman expressed her surprise at this; but told him, if he would agree to follow her advice, she would soon put him on the right scent, so as to succeed to his heart's wish. To which the Devil made answer, he would do every thing which she would please to enjoin him in that particular, so he could only see that happy man and his wife fairly embroiled and angry with each other.

"Having agreed to effect this, the strange woman set out towards the place where this contented couple abode. And by degrees she got acquainted with the good wife; and most, by telling her that she had once been servant to her mother, for which reason she felt bound to do for her also every service which she had in her power. Lending ear to

all this, the wife took her into the house, entrusted her with all her concerns, as likewise did the husband. Well! and after having remained with them some time on this confidential footing, she one day came with a very long, sad countenance, and thus accosted the good wife:—'It vexes me much to see, my daughter, that your husband rejoices himself more in the company of other women than in your own; and methinks it might be well so to honour and humour him as to lead him to change his mind in this respect, lest some evil greater than any other should happen to arise therefrom between you.'

"When the honest creature had heard these words, albeit she gave not full credence to them; she felt uneasy and disturbed. On seeing how unhappy she looked, the vile wretch, instead of feeling compassion, forthwith hastened to the place where she knew her husband would be sure to pass by, and accosting him as he came, she said that she wondered how, having so good a wife, he should have set his affections on any other woman,—a fact which had come to his wife's ears; who seeing so bad a return for all her services, had resolved to listen to the love of another man, who would perhaps give her better treatment than he had done. She then entreated of him not to betray this information to his wife, or she herself would else be a dead woman. The poor man could hardly believe his own ears when this information reached him; and though he would not give credit to it, nevertheless he felt suspicious and unhappy, just as the good wife had done. Leaving him thus, the evil creature returned to the wife, and said to her, with a look of great concern, 'My daughter, I know not what misfortune hath happened, but your husband seems strangely incensed against you; and that you will soon know, by the manner in which even now he seems to be approaching us. His looks are strangely angry, such as he is not wont to shew.' And having said these words she left her. The husband on entering the house, and finding his partner looking so strange at him, and so miserable, with none of the comforts they had been used to enjoy together, he felt so grieved and shocked that he quickly took himself out of the house again.

"It was thus that this false, strange woman began to redouble her arts, hinting to her, that it would be well to seek out some wise man or other, who knew how to cure such evil inclinations of men, as had got possession of her husband's mind. To this the unhappy wife consented. The false friend went on the search; and at the end of some days she returned, saying that she had at last found such a wise man, very learned in his art. He had told her, said she, that if the wife would cut off a lock of her husband's hair, and pluck out some of his beard, he could mix them together so as to produce a kind of spell, which would irresistibly act upon him, and in such a manner as to restore him completely to his former love and confidence, and perhaps make them both lead a happier life than they had ever done before. For this purpose she had brought the good wife a razor, with which, when the hour came when her husband should be fast asleep, she might cut off his hair, and prepare means for administering the charm. To all this the good woman

consented, out of pure regard for her husband, and the desire she felt to do away with the strange, cold, looks, with which he had lately regarded her. So, wishing to lead the same quiet life she had formerly done, she took the razor from the hand of that false friend, while the latter again went to the husband, and declared that she had brought him some very unwelcome news—such as she could no longer conceal, out of regard to him—no less indeed than what concerned his life, which his wife was preparing to take away by violence; and then to flee with her friend and paramour. The manner of doing this would be by throwing him into a deep slumber, and then to come secretly upon him, and cut off his head with a sharp razor. What was the strange horror and affright of the good husband on hearing these tidings, false as was the fearful wretch that had uttered them. Cautious, and full of care, he bent his steps towards his own house, where his wife received him with more good will and affection than she had latterly shewn, and said to him, as he looked ill and wearied, he would do well to retire early to rest, and to take a warm drink to compose him—and which she very earnestly insisted upon his doing. The good man no longer doubted but that what he had been told by the false friend was true, and to try the truth of it he went, and soon feigned himself to be asleep. While in this condition, his wife cautiously approached the chamber, intending to cut off a lock of his hair and whiskers, according to the plan agreed upon with that strange wicked woman.

When the husband saw her with razor in hand approach near, open it, and bending over him, prepare, as he thought, to cut his throat, seizing her arm he wrenched the weapon from her grasp, and in the madness of the moment, directing it against the supposed murderess, he nearly separated her head from her body. At the terrific noise thus occasioned, the father and brothers of the wretched wife, who lived at hand, being apprized of it, ran wildly to the spot; and seeing their relation all weltering in her blood, and never having heard the least evil thing in regard to her, they all fell suddenly upon the distracted husband and slew him. This last act, coming likewise to the knowledge of the poor man's friends and relations, they ran in a body, and attacking those of the wife, killed and wounded many of them, till the quarrel gaining a head on all sides, the larger part of the population of the village took it up, and were that day slain. Now the whole of the dreadful scene arose merely from the false and wicked words of that strange woman. But as the just God never permits that wicked actions should be wrought by men without their paying the penalty due to their several crimes, and making them manifest to the world, so it became known that this dreadful event was wholly owing to the malice of that wicked woman, instigated by the Devil, and upon whom the Divine judgment fell heavily; inasmuch as she was put to a shameful and cruel end.

"And you, my Lord Count Lucanor, if you wish to learn who among all is the worst of men, and from what cause proceeds the greatest mischief among people, it is from the man who, under the mask of a good Christian and a loyal friend, conceals evil designs, and disseminates lies and falsehoods that injure

and embroil others. I would therefore counsel you to be on your guard against men who assume the semblance of religion, who are ever intent upon some deceitful end; and for this reason take you the advice of Scripture, which says, that 'from their fruits you shall know them, and their works will speak for them'; for be assured there exists not any who can long conceal the nature of the works which it is His will to perform." The Count agreed in the truth of what Patronio said, and made a resolution to do as he was advised, praying that God would protect him and all his friends from every such a man. Finding, moreover, that this example was excellently good, Don Juan Manuel caused it to be written in this book, and made upon it the verses which are to this purport:—

"If you would 'scape the false and secret snare,
Heed not the looks; heed what man's works declare!"

A Capillary Crime

NEAR the summit of the hill in the Quartier Montmartre, Paris, is a little street in which the grass grows between the paving-stones, as in the avenues of some dead old Italian city. Tall buildings border it for about one third its length, and the walls of tiny gardens, belonging to houses on adjacent streets, occupy the rest of its extent. It is a populous thoroughfare, but no wheels pass through it, for the very good reason that near the upper end it suddenly takes a short turn, and shoots up the hill at an incline too steep for a horse to climb. The regular morning refuse cart, and on rare occasions a public carriage, venture a short distance into the lower part of the street, and even these, on wet, slippery days, do not pass the door of the first house. Scarcely two minutes' walk from the busy exterior boulevards, this little corner of the great city is as quiet as a village nearly all day long. Early in the morning the sidewalks clatter with the shoes of workmen hurrying down to their work, children scamper along playing hide-and-seek in the doorways on their way to school, and then follows a long silence, broken only by the glazier with his shrill cry, "Vi-i-i-trier!" or the farmer with his "A la crème, fromage à la crème!" In the late summer afternoons the women bring their babies out and sit on the doorsteps, as the Italians do, gossiping across the street, and watching the urchins pitch sous against the curb-stone, or draw schoolboy hieroglyphics on the garden walls. There is a musical quiet in this little street. Birds sing merrily in the stunted trees of the shady gardens, the familiar calls of hens and chickens and the shrill crows of the cock come from every enclosure, and all the

while is heard the deep and continuous note of the rumble of the city down below. At night the street is lighted by two lanterns swung on ropes between opposite houses; and the flickering, dim light, sending uncertain shadows upon the blank walls and the towering façades, gives the place a weird and fantastic aspect.

Montmartre is full of these curious highways. Quite distinct from the rest of the city by reason of its elevated position, few or no modern improvements have changed its character, and a large extent of it remains to-day much the same as it was fifty years ago.

It is perhaps the cheapest quarter of the city. Rents are low, and the necessities and commodities of life are proportionately cheaper than in other parts of the town. This fact, and the situation the quarter affords for unobstructed view of the sky, have always attracted artists, and many cosy studios are hidden away in the maze of housetops there. On the little street I have just described are several large windows indicating unmistakably the profession of those occupying the apartments.

Late one dark and stormy evening a gate creaked and an automatic bell sounded at the entrance to one of the little gardens half-way up the street. A young woman came out into the light of the swinging lantern, and hurried down the sidewalk. Her unnaturally quick and spasmodic movements showed she was anxious to get away from the neighborhood as quickly as possible. Her instinctive avoidance of the bad places in the sidewalk gave evidence of her familiarity with the locality. In a few moments she had left the tortuous narrow side street that led down the hill, and stood upon the brilliantly lighted boulevard. Pausing for an instant only, she rapidly crossed the street, and soon stood beside the fountain in the Place Pigalle. Here she watched for a moment the surface of the water, ruffled by the gusts of wind and beaten by the fierce rain-drops. Suddenly she turned and hurried away down the Rue Pigalle, across to the Rue Blanche, and was shortly lost in the crowd that was pouring out of the door-way of the skating-rink.

The little street on the hill remained deserted and desolate. The lights in the windows went out one by one. The wind gusts swayed the lanterns to and fro, creaking the rusty pulleys and rattling the glass in the iron frames. Now and then a gate was blown backward and forward with a dull sound, a shutter slammed, and between the surges of the wind could be heard the spirting of the stream from the spouts and the rush of the water in the gutters. Towards midnight a single workman staggered up the street from the cheap cabaret kept in the wood-and-charcoal shop on the corner. A little later a *sergent de ville*, wrapped in a cloak, passed slowly up the sidewalk, until he came to a spot where the asphalt was worn away, and there was a great pool of muddy water. There he stopped, turned around, and strode down the street again. The melancholy music of the storm went on.

Suddenly, towards morning, there was a dull, prolonged report like the sound of a distant blast of rocks. The great studio window over the little garden flashed red for an instant, then grew black again, and all was still. Away up on the opposite side of the street a window was opened, a head thrust out,

and, meeting the drenching rain, was quickly withdrawn. A hand and bare arm were pushed through the half-open window, feeling for the fastening of the shutter. In an adjoining house a light was seen in the window, and it continued to burn. Then the mournful music of the tempest went on as before.

Shortly after daybreak the same young woman who had fled so hastily the evening before, slowly and with difficulty mounted the hill. Her clothes were saturated with the rain, and clung to her form as the violent wind caught her and sent her staggering along. Her bonnet was out of shape and beaten down around her ears, and her dark hair was matted on her forehead. Her face was haggard, and her eyes were large and full of a strange gleam. She was evidently of Southern birth, for her features had the sculpturesque regularity of the Italian, and her skin, though pallid and bloodless, was still deep in tone. She hesitated at the garden gate for a while, then opened it, entered, and shut it behind her, the automatic bell tinkling loudly. No one appearing at the door, she opened and shut the gate again to ring the bell. A second and third time she rang in the same way, and without any response from the house. At last, hearing no sound, she crossed the garden, tried the house door, and, finding it unlocked, opened it and went in. Shortly afterwards a frightened cry was heard in the studio, and a moment later the girl came out of the house, her haggard face white with fear. Clutching her hands together with a nervous motion, she hastened down the street. A half-hour later a *femme de ménage* opened the gate, passed through the garden, and tried her key in the door. Finding it unlocked, she simply said, "Perhaps he's gone out," and went into the kitchen and began to prepare breakfast. Before the water boiled the gate opened sharply, and three persons entered; first, the martial figure of a *sergent de ville;* second, a tall, blond young man in a brown velveteen coat and waistcoat and light trousers; and, lastly, the girl, still trembling and panting. The *sergent* carefully locked the gate on the inside, taking the key with him, and, followed by the young man, entered the house, paused in the kitchen for a few rapid words with the *femme de ménage,* and then went up into the studio. The girl crouched down upon the stone step by the gate and hid her face.

The studio was of irregular shape, having curious projections and corners, and one third of the ceiling lower than the rest. The alcove formed by this drop in the ceiling was about the size of an ordinary bedchamber. The drawn curtain of the large side window shut out so much of the dim daylight that the whole studio was in twilight. In the farther corner of the deep alcove was a low divan, filling the recess between a quaint staircase which led into the attic and the wall opposite the window. This divan served as a bed, and on it, half covered with the bedclothes, lay a man, stretched on his back, with his face turned towards the window. The left arm hung over the edge of the divan, and the hand, turned inertly under the wrist, rested on the floor. There was the unmistakable pallor of death on the face, visible even in the uncertain gloom. The *sergent* quickly lowered the curtain, letting in a flood of cold, gray light. Then great blood-stains were seen on

the pillow, and on the neck and shoulders of the shirt. Beside the bed stood, like a grim guard of the dead body, the rigid and angular figure of a manikin dressed in Turkish costume. Between the manikin and the window lay on the floor a large flint-lock pistol. Near the window stood an easel, with a large canvas turned away from the light.

The two men paused in the middle of the studio, and looked at the spectacle without speaking. Then the young man rushed to the divan, and caught the arm that hung over the side, but dropped it instantly again.

"Touch nothing. Do not touch a single object," commanded the *sergent*, sternly. Then he approached the body himself, put his hand on the face, and said, "He is dead." Taking the young man by the arm, he led him out of the room, carefully locking the door behind him. In the kitchen he wrote a few words on a leaf torn from his note-book, gave it to the *femme de ménage* with a hasty direction, checked her avalanche of questions with a single, significant gesture, led the way into the garden, unlocked the gate, and half pushed her into the street.

He stood quietly watching the crouching figure of the young girl for some time, then stooping over her, raised her, half forcibly, half gently, to her feet, and pointed out that the place where she sat was wet and muddy. Then he made a few commonplace remarks about the weather. In a short time the *femme de ménage* returned, breathless, accompanied by two more officers, one of them a lieutenant.

It was curious to see the instantaneous transformation of the little street when the *femme de ménage* and the two policemen entered the gate. Windows were opened and heads thrust out on all sides. It was impossible to say where the people came from, but in a very short time the street was blocked with a crowd that gathered around the gate. Those on the sidewalk struggled to get a peep through the gate, while those in the street stared fixedly at the studio window. One or two tried to force the gate open, but a *sergent de ville*, posted inside, pushed the bolts in place. The *femme de ménage*, who had managed to get a glimpse of the scene in the studio, sat weeping dramatically at the kitchen window.

The lieutenant and the *sergent* who first came went from one room to another, examining everything with care, to see if there had been a robbery. In the studio they scrutinized every inch of the room, even to the dust-covered stairway that led to the little attic over the alcove. Then, after a hasty examination of the corpse, they mounted the stairway that led from the entry to the roof, and searched for fresh scratches on the lead-covered promenade there. Apparently satisfied with the completeness of their search, they remained awhile there, looking at the slated roof, and at the hawthorn-tree which stretched two or three strong branches almost up to the iron railing of the balcony.

The lieutenant then, with great deliberation, took down in his note-book the exact situation in the studio, measuring carefully the distance of the pistol from the body, noting the angle of the wound (for the ball had gone through the head just over the ear), taking account of many things that would have escaped the attention of the ordinary observer.

When this was finished, he sent away one of the *sergents,* who shortly returned with two men bearing a stretcher, or rather a rusty black bier. The men were conducted to the studio, and there, with business-like haste, they placed the body on the bier, strapped it firmly there, covered it with a soiled and much-worn black cloth, and with the aid of the officers carried it down the stairs and out of the house into the garden. The girl, who had remained standing where the *sergent* had placed her, sank down again on the stone steps at the sight of the black bier and its burden, and hid her face in her hands. There was a momentary gleam of something like satisfaction in the eye of the *sergent* who stood beside her.

The lieutenant, who had remained to put seals on the door of the studio, on the door which led out upon the promenade, and upon all the windows of the upper stories, came out of the house, followed by the young man in the velveteen coat, and the weeping *femme de ménage.* The lieutenant had a bundle in his arms a foot and a half long, done up in a newspaper. He gave the *sergent* at the gate a brief order, then went out into the street, clearing the sidewalk of the crowd. The body was next borne out, and the young man and the two women, followed by one of the *sergents,* presented themselves to the eyes of the curious multitude. Without delay the two bearers marched off down the street at a rapid pace, the heavy burden shaking with the rhythm of their step. The little procession of officers and prisoners, accompanied by the whole of the great crowd, followed the bier to the prefecture. There a preliminary examination of the two women and the young man was held, and they were all detained as witnesses. The body was carried to the morgue.

It would be tedious to describe in detail the different processes of law which to our Anglo-Saxon eyes appear but empty and useless indignities heaped upon the defenceless dead. Neither would it be an attractive task to give a minute account of the meagre funeral ceremonies which the friends of the dead artist conducted, after they had succeeded in getting possession of the body for burial. The grave was dug in the cemetery of Montmartre, and the few simple tributes of friendship placed on the mound were lost among the flashing filigree emblems and gaudy wreaths which adorned the surrounding tombstones.

The theories which were advanced by the three officers who had examined the premises were distinguished by some invention and ingenuity. From carefully collected information concerning the intimate life and whole history of the three persons kept as witnesses, the officers constructed each his separate romance about the motives for the crime and the manner in which it was committed. The lieutenant had quite a voluminous biography of each character.

Concerning Charles Mandel, the dead artist, it was found that he was a native of Styria, in Austria; that his parents and all his relatives were exceedingly poor; that he had worked his way up from a place as a farmer's boy to a position as attendant in the baths at Gastein, and thence he had found his way to Munich, and to the School of Fine Arts there. He had taken a good rank in the Academy, and after several years' study, supporting himself mean-

while on a small government subsidy and by the sale of pen-and-ink sketches, he began to paint pictures. When he had saved money enough he came to Paris, where he had lived about eighteen months. His character was unimpeachable. He lived quietly, and rarely went out of the quarter; was never seen at the balls in the old windmill on the summit of Montmartre, nor did he frequent the Elisée Montmartre, the skating rink, the Cirque Fernando, nor any other place of amusement in the neighborhood. The little Café du Rat Mort, in the Place Pigalle, was the only café he visited, and in this he was accustomed to pass an hour or two every evening in company with his friend, the sculptor Paul Benner. He was not known to have any enemies, there was no suspicion that he was connected with the Internationalists, and the only reason he had been remarked at all as an individual was because he spoke French badly, and always conversed in German with his friend Benner.

The information concerning the latter was a great deal more accurate and precise. A great deal of it, however, was irrelevant. He was born in Strasburg, in 1849, and began the study of his profession there. He came to Paris when he was twenty years old, and entered the Académie des Beaux Arts. After he had finished the course he set up his studio in Montmartre, and had already exhibited successful works in three *salons*. He had a great many friends in the city, and was well spoken of by all who knew him. The only thing that could possibly be urged against him was the fact that he seemed very little disturbed at the idea of being a Prussian subject. But he was consistently cosmopolitan, as his intimate friendship with the Austrian and his equally close relations with fellow-students in the Beaux Arts abundantly proved.

The inquiries about the girl were, judging from the frequent gaps in the history as written in the lieutenant's note-book, conducted with difficulty, and with only partial success. She was a Corsican, and was generally called Rose Blanche, the translation of her Corsican name, Rosina Bianchi. By the artists she was facetiously called La Rose Blanche, partly because of her hair and complexion, which were of the darkest Southern hue, and partly for the sake of the grammatical harmony of the name thus altered. Nothing in particular was found out about her early life. She herself declared she was born in a small village in the mountains of Corsica, and that her father, mother, and several brothers and sisters were still living there. She had come to Paris as a model just before the siege, having first begun to pose in Marseilles, whither she had gone from Corsica to live with an aunt. This aunt had married a crockery merchant, and was a respectable member of the community. From her was gleaned some notion of the family. It was of genuine Corsican stock, and they all had the violent passions which are the common characteristic of that people. Rosina, while in Marseilles, had been quiet and proper enough except when she had been, as her aunt described, *un peu toquee*. At long intervals it seems that she became highly sensitive and excitable. She would on these occasions fly into a mad rage at a trifle, and when she grew calmer would sob and weep for a while, and end by remaining sullen and morose for

hours, sometimes for days. Her aunt had opposed her going to Paris, prophesying all sorts of evil. She had never seen her since her departure, and had only heard from her twice or three times since she had left Marseilles.

There was scarcely a better-known model in Paris than La Rose Blanche. She was not one of those choice favorites who are engaged for months and sometimes for a year in advance at double prices, but she was in great demand, especially among sculptors. Her head was Italian enough to serve as a model for the costume pictures of the Campagna peasants, but she was much more picturesque as a Spanish girl, and her employment among the painters was chiefly with those who painted Spanish or Eastern subjects. The sculptors found in her form a certain girlishness which had not disappeared with age, and although she was twenty-five years old, she had the lithe, slender figure of a girl of seventeen. There was something of the faun in the accents of her limbs, and she was active, wiry, and muscular. The artists connected the peculiarities of her figure with the characteristics of her disposition, and often said to her, "What a hand and arm for a stiletto!" "Yes," she would answer, with a glittering eye; "and it isn't afraid to hold one either!" Every one had noticed her violent temper, and some of those who were best acquainted with her confessed to the feeling that it was like playing with gunpowder to have much to do with her. When she was in good spirits, she was soft-mannered and amiable; but when roused in the least, she became like a fury. She had frequently posed in the *ateliers,* and then she had been treated with great respect by the students. For the past year she had served often as a model for Benner in the execution of his statue "Diana surprised at her Bath," and when she was not at work with him was generally in Mandel's studio, where she posed for a figure in a picture from the history of Hungary, an event in one of the Turkish invasions. With the exception of the report of her eccentricities of temper, nothing had counted against her. Even this was partly counter-balanced by the testimony of many to whom she had been both kind and useful. As far as her moral character went, some had said, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders, "She's a model, and like all the rest of them." Others had declared that she was undoubtedly honest and virtuous. No one knew anything—at least no one confessed to any positive knowledge—of her suspected transgressions.

The poor *femme de ménage,* whose life had been hitherto without an event worth the attention of the police, did not escape the most rigid scrutiny. Her history was sifted out as carefully as that of the other three. She was married to a second husband, and the mother of a boy of eighteen, who was salesman in one of the large dry-goods shops. Her husband, besides the duties of concierge in the house where they lived—an occupation which paid for the rent of the rooms they occupied—managed to make a trifle at his trade of tailor, repairing and turning old garments, and on rare occasions making a new coat or a pair of trousers for an old customer. He was also employed as a supernumerary in the Grand Opera, a duty which obliged him to attend the theatre often, to the serious interruption of his

home occupations. He could not well give up the place in the theatre, for his salary was just enough, with the rest he earned, to make both ends meet. The wife was obliged to be at home so much, to fill her husband's place in the care of the great house, that she could only manage to do very little outside work. The families in the house were all working people, and consequently could not afford the luxury of assistance in the kitchen. She therefore found a place as *femme de ménage* with some family in the vicinity. For some time she had been in the employ of the dead artist, and was particularly satisfied with the place, first because she could choose her own hours, and then because she had very little to do, and was paid as much as if she took care of a family —twenty francs a month. One circumstance excited the suspicion of the police. She had been gone nearly the whole afternoon of the day before the murder. When she returned at dark her husband noticed that she was heated and confused, and asked her where she had been. She refused to tell him, painfully trying to make the refusal palatable by jokes. And the police with little difficulty found out exactly what she had been doing for the three or four hours in question. She had been to the Cemetery of Montmartre. She had been seen by the keepers there busy near a grave on the third side avenue to the left, about a quarter way up the slope. They had observed her digging up the two small flowering shrubs she had planted there years before, and had constantly tended. These shrubs she had wrapped up in an old colored shirt, and had carried them away. Further, a neighbor of the dead artist in the little street on Montmartre deposed that late in the afternoon of the day before the tragedy she had seen the *femme de ménage* enter the gate of the studio garden, bearing an irregular-shaped bundle of considerable size. The police, on visiting the garden, found the two shrubs described by the keepers of the cemetery freshly planted in the little central plot.

Then for the first time they questioned the *femme de ménage* herself, and she confessed, with an abundance of tears, that her only daughter had died five years previous, and that she had been buried in the Cimetière Montmartre, and the grave had been purchased for the period of five years. The term was to expire within a few days, and the poor woman, unable to pay for a further lease of ground, was obliged to give up her claim to the grave. She could not bear to lose the shrubs, for they were souvenirs of her dead child, who cultivated them when very small plants in flower-pots on the balcony. The mother had dug them up in the cemetery, and transplated them in the garden of the house where she worked, having no garden-plot of her own. She intended the next day to tell the artist what she had done, and to get his permission to let the shrubs flourish there. She had refused to explain her absence to her husband because the girl had been dead a year when she married him, and he had sometimes reproached her for spending her time in the cemetery. As it was not his child, he could not be expected to care for it; and the poor mother, not having the courage to ask for money to renew the lease of the grave, kept her own counsel about the matter.

The examination of the witnesses, and the investigation of their personal history, threw but little light upon the exact state of the relations which existed between the painter and La Rose Blanche. The neighbors had overheard at various times loud talking in the studio, and occasionally some violent language that sounded very much like a quarrel. One or two of the shrewd ones, especially an old woman who sold vegetables from a little hand-cart on the corner, volunteered their opinion that the model was in love with the artist. The withered and blear-eyed old huckster gave as reason for her opinion that the model had generally stayed long after painting hours, and was unusually prompt in the morning. But there was quite as much proof that Mandel did not care for the model as that she was enamoured of him. He never watched for her in the morning, never came to the door with her; treated her always, as far as was noticed by any one who had seen them together, as if on the most formal terms with her. In the Café du Rat Mort it was found that La Rose Blanche had often come in during the evening, sometimes in fine costume and elaborate toilet, and had placed herself at the table where Mandel and Benner sat. The latter always appeared glad to see her, and joked and chatted with her, while Mandel was evidently annoyed by her presence, and did not try very hard to conceal his feelings.

An almost inquisitorial examination of Benner elicited the fact that his friend had confided to him that the model tormented him with her attentions, and so thrust herself upon him that he was at a loss what to do about it. He had thought seriously of giving up the picture he was at work on, so that she might have no excuse for coming to his studio. The same examination drew out the confession that he was in love with La Rose Blanche himself, and had been for some time.

Now the most plausible theory of the three officers was apparently well enough supported by the fact to warrant a most careful investigation. This theory was based chiefly on the common French axiom that a woman is at the bottom of every piece of mischief. The strongest suspicion pointed towards La Rose Blanche, and no motive but that of jealousy could be assigned for the deed. It was necessary, then, to find some cause for jealousy before this theory could be accepted. Mandel was, as the study of his character had proved to the officers, of a quiet and peaceable disposition, and not in the habit of frequenting society. Although, like most young men, he spent part of his time in the café, he was more disposed to stay at home than to join in any time-killing amusement. After the most diligent search, the officers only succeeded in finding one girl besides La Rose Blanche who had been at all on friendly terms with the artist. She was a model who had posed for a picture he painted while he occupied a studio in Rue Monsieur le Prince, in the Latin Quarter. But it was also found out that La Rose Blanche had never seen Mandel until long after the picture was finished and the model dismissed. In this way the investigation went on with all possible ingenuity and most wearisome deliberation. No effort was more fruitful than the one just described. Every clue which promised

to lead to the slightest knowledge of the life of the artist or the character of the model was followed out persistently, doggedly, and often even cruelly. Thus months passed.

Benner had been discharged from custody after his first long and trying examination. Unable to work, he wandered around the city in an aimless way. He could not help having a faint yet agonizing glimmer of hope that he might meet with a solution of the mystery of his friend's death. This solution would, he was sure, prove La Rose Blanche innocent. His unfinished statue in the clay, moistened only at irregular intervals, cracked and shrunk, and gradually fell to pieces. Dust settled in his studio, and his modelling tools rusted where they lay. At first he had tried to work, and, summoning another model, he had uncovered the clay. But he only spoiled what he touched, and after a short time he threw down his tools and walked away.

La Rose Blanche languished in the house of detention. Benner gradually began to lose courage, and perhaps even his faith wavered a little. When he learned that in the course of examination the sleepy concierge of the house where the model lived had testified that she was absent all night at the time of the tragedy, Benner felt convinced that circumstances had combined to convict the girl. Her explanation had been most unsatisfactory. She had quarrelled with the artist because he told her he was annoyed by her. She did not remember what she said or did; she only knew that she left the house in a great passion, and walked the streets all night in the rain. Her passion gave way to her affection for the artist, and as soon as it was light she went to the studio to ask him to forgive her. She found him dead.

It was the apathy of La Rose Blanche quite as much as her inability to prove herself innocent that caused the increasing uneasiness in Benner's mind. Not that he believed her for a moment guilty, but he knew that she was convicting herself with fatal rapidity. He, knowing her character, could understand how she could walk the streets all night in the storm. He, in the warmth of his passion for her, had often fought with the weather for the relief the struggle afforded him. Love-madness is nothing new, and the model's actions were only one phase of it. At the little Café du Rat Mort, Benner now spent all his evenings, and on some days part of the afternoon. He grew to be one of the fixtures of the establishment. The habitués of the place had ceased to talk about him, and no longer pointed him out to the new-comers as the friend of the dead artist. The self-consciousness, which in the beginning was painful to him, gradually wore away, and he almost forgot himself at times in connection with the tragedy, and only kept constantly a dull sense of waiting—waiting for he knew not what. Evening after evening he sat at the little corner table of the front room of the café, smoking cigarettes, playing with the curious long-handled spoons, and occasionally sipping coffee or a glass of beer. The two tables between his seat and the window on the street changed occupants many times during the evening, and the newspapers grew sticky, fumbled, and worn at the hands of the frequent readers. The opposite side of this room of the café was filled

by a long counter, covered on top with shining zinc, and divided into several compartments, on the highest of which stood the water carafes and a filter. Behind this counter sat Madame Lépic, the wife of the proprietor, placidly knitting from morning until midnight. When the street door opened she raised her eyes and greeted the comer with a hospitable smile; then her face resumed its normal expression of contentment. By carefully watching her it could be discovered that she had a habit of quickly glancing out from under her eyebrows and taking in the whole interior of the café in a flash of her dark little eye. Just beyond the end of the counter a partition, wainscoted as high as a man's shoulder and with glass above, divided the café into two rooms. From where she sat Madame Lépic could overlook the four tables in the inner room as well as the three in the front. Her habit of constant watchfulness was cultivated, of course, by the necessity of keeping run of the two tired-looking waiters, who, like the rest of their class, had the weakness of being tempted by the abundance of money which passed through their hands. The police had already approached Madame Lépic, and she had given her testimony in regard to the actions of the model with the two young men. The Police would not have been Parisian if they had not engaged madame to keep an eye on Benner. If he had not been too much occupied with his own thoughts, he might have detected her watching him constantly and persistently, even after he had ceased to be interesting in the eyes of the old habitués of the café.

It was a long four months after that terrible morning when Benner sat, late one afternoon, in the café brooding as usual. Before him on the stained marble slab stood a glass of water, a tall goblet and long spoon with twisted handle, and a porcelain match-holder half full of matches. Bent over the table, Benner was absent-mindedly arranging bits of matches on the slab, something in the shape of a guillotine. There were few people in the café. The click of the dominoes in the back room, an occasional word from one of the players, and the snap, snap, of Madame Lépic's needles alone broke the quiet of the interior. As Benner sat watching the outline of the guillotine he had formed of broken matches, he saw one of the corner pieces straighten out, and thus destroy the symmetry of the arrangement. This was a piece which had been bent at right angles and only half broken off. Without paying particular attention to the occurrence, he took up the bit, threw it on the floor, and put another one, similarly broken, in its place. In a few moments this straightened out also, and this time the movement attracted Benner's curiosity. Throwing it aside, he replaced it by a fresh piece, and this repeated the movement of the first two. Now his curiosity was excited in earnest, and his face and figure expressed such unusual interest that the sharp glitter was visible under Madame Lépic's eyebrows, and her knitting went on only spasmodically. A fourth, fifth, and sixth piece was put in place on the corner of the little guillotine, and as the last one was moving in the same way as the first one did, Benner per-

ceived that the water spilled on the table trickled down to where the broken match was placed. He took another match, as if to break it, but before the brittle wood snapped, his face lit up with a sudden expression of surprise and joy, and he started to his feet so violently as to nearly throw the marble slab from the iron legs. The click of the dominoes ceased, faces were seen at the glass of the partition, and Madame Lépic fairly stared, forgetting for once her rôle of disinterested knitter.

Without stopping to pay, without seeming to see anybody or anything, Benner strode nervously and quickly out of the café. When he was gone, Madame Lépic touched her bell, one of the drowsy waiters came, received a whispered order, and went out of the front door hatless. A few moments later, even before Benner had disappeared along the boulevard in the direction of his studio, a neatly dressed man came out of the police station near the café and walked in the same direction the sculptor had taken. After Benner had entered the *porte-cochère* of the great building where his studio was, the police agent went into the concierge's little office near the door, and sat there as if he were at home. In a few moments a nervous step was heard on the asphalt of the court-yard, and the agent had only time to withdraw into the gloom of the corner behind the stove when Benner passed out again, looking neither to the right nor the left. He was evidently much excited, and clutched rather than held a small parcel in his hand. The agent followed him a short distance behind, and, meeting a *sergent de ville,* paused to say a word to him. As Benner climbed on the top of an Odéon omnibus, the agent took a seat inside. Benner had not reached the interior boulevard before his studio was searched.

It was now nearly six o'clock, and the omnibus was crowded all the way across the city. As soon as the foot of the Rue des Beaux Arts was reached, Benner hurriedly descended, without waiting to stop the omnibus, and ran to the Academy. Here he sought the concierge, asked him a few questions, and then walked quickly away to the east side of the Luxembourg Gardens, where he rang the bell at the door of a house. He asked the servant who answered the bell if Professor Brunin was at home, and was evidently chagrined at being told he was absent and would not return for an hour or two. Entering the nearest café, he called for pen and paper, and wrote three pages rapidly, but legibly. By this time he had grown calmer in mind, not losing, however, the physical spring which his first excitement had induced. When his letter was finished he put it in an envelope, addressed it, and left it at the professor's house. This done, he walked rapidly across the Luxembourg Gardens to the Odéon, took an omnibus, accompanied as before by the agent, and at the end of the route, in the Place Pigalle, he descended, hastened to his studio, and did not come out again that evening. The great window was lighted all night long, and the agent in the entry could hear sawing, hammering, and filing at intervals, as he listened at the door every hour or two.

The gray morning broke, and Benner was still at his work. As the daylight dimmed the light of the lamp, he seemed not to notice it, but continued bent over his table, where various blocks, pieces of sheet brass, and a few tools were scattered promiscuously about. A piece of brown paper lay on the floor with what appeared to be a glove. On the corner of the table was a rude imitation of a human hand made of wood, hinged so that the fingers would move. This was not of recent construction; but on a small drawing-board, over which Benner was leaning, was fixed a curious piece of mechanism which he was adjusting, having apparently just put it in working order. He had joined together five pieces of oak-wood, about three quarters of an inch wide and half an inch thick, arranged according to their length. The joints had been cut in the shape of quarter-circles, like the middle hinge of a carpenter's rule. After these were fitted to each other, a saw-cut was made in each one, and a piece of sheet brass inserted which joined the concave to the convex end. Two rivets on one end and one on the other, serving as a pivot, completed the hinge. The joints were so arranged that, when opened to the greatest extent, the five pieces composing the whole made a straight line. The longest piece of wood was fastened at the middle and outer end by screws, which held it firmly to the drawing-board. The shortest piece, on the opposite end of the line, had attached to it on the under side a pointed bit of brass like an index. As morning broke, Benner was engaged in fixing a bit of an ivory metre measure, which is marked to millimetres, underneath this index point. After this scale was securely fastened in its place the mechanism was evidently completed, for he straightened up, looked at his work from a distance, then bent over it again, and gently tried the joints, watching with some satisfaction the index as it moved along the scale. While preoccupied with this study, a sudden knock at the door caused him to start like a guilty man. He threw open the door almost tragically. It was only the concierge, who brought him a letter. He tore it open, and read it and re-read it with eagerness; then went to the table and carefully measured several times the whole length of the mechanism, from the inner screw of the longest piece to the end of the shortest. He then began to calculate and to cipher on the edge of the drawing-board. The letter read as follows:

"Monsieur,—En fait de renseignements sur la dilatation du bois je ne connais que ceux donnés par M. Reynaud dans son traité d'architecture, vol. i., pages 84 à 87 de la 2d êdition.

"Il en résulte que:

"1. Les bois verts se dilatent beaucoup plus que ceux purgés de sève.

"2. Que le chêne se dilate tantôt plus tantôt moins que la sapin, mais plus que le noyer.

"3. Que dans les conditions ordinaires, c'est a dire, avec les variations hygrométriques de l'air seulement, le coefficient de dilatation atteint au plus 0.018, d'ou résulte qu'une planche de 0.20 deviendrait 0.2036.

"4. Qu'en plongeant dans l'eau pendant longtemps une planche primitivement très sèche, le coefficient de dilata-

tion peut atteindre 0.0375, ce que donnerait pour la planche de 0.20, 0.2075.

"Peut-être vous trouverez d'autres renseignements dans le traité de charpente du Colonel Emy, ou dans celui de menuiserie de Roubo.

"Recevez, Monsieur, l'assurance de mes sentiments distingués.

P. BRUNIN."

A few days later there was gathered in a small room in the prefecture quite a knot of advocates and police officers. They were soon joined by Benner himself, accompanied by a short, stout gentleman with eye-glasses. Besides the ordinary furniture of the room, there was a wash-tub, a pail of water, a manikin, and the drawing-board with the mechanism on it. The entrance of the judge put a stop to the buzz of conversation, and when he took a seat on the low platform the rest of the company placed themselves on the benches in front. The judge, after a few preliminary remarks on the subject of the mystery of Montmartre, said that there had lately been developed such a new and surprising theory to account for the death of the artist that he had consented to give a hearing to the explanation of the theory. Benner then arose and made the following statement: "In the Café du Rat Mort, a few days ago, I noticed a peculiar movement in a broken match as it lay on the table before me. At first my curiosity was excited only to a moderate degree, but shortly this inexplicable motion interested me so that I experimented until I found the cause of it. At the same moment there flashed into my mind what I had learned long ago at school about capillary force, and the solution of the mystery of my friend's death was at once plain to me. Hurrying to my studio, I cut off the hand of my manikin, and carried it to the Academy of Fine Arts to show it to Professor Brunin, of the Architectural Department, and ask his assistance. Finding him neither there nor at his house, I wrote him a note and left it for him. All that night I worked constructing a working model of a manikin's finger, and the next morning I received a letter from Professor Brunin which gave me the data I was in search of—the facts in regard to the expansion of wood when moistened. I should read that letter here, but Professor Brunin is present, and will explain the phenomenon. My theory is very simple. My friend Charles Mandel was shot by his own manikin. There are witnesses enough to prove that the pistol had been loaded for a long time, and that Mandel had often tried in vain to draw the charge. It is also well known that the pistol was cocked when it was in the manikin's belt, for on the half-completed picture it was so painted by Mandel on the last day of his life. Furthermore, the position of the right index finger of the manikin can also be plainly seen in the picture; for the artist, not having a model to hold the weapon, had roughly rubbed in the angular fingers of the lay figure, preparatory to finishing the hand from life. The pistol then, being loaded and cocked, needed but the pressure of the finger to discharge it. That pressure was given by the rain on the night of the death of my friend. The lieutenant will find,

on reference to his notebook, that on the morning when he examined the studio there had been quite a serious leak in the ceiling, and that the water had fallen directly on the manikin. He will find also in his notes the exact position of the manikin in reference to the divan on which the corpse lay. Now, it is clear that when the wrist of the manikin was bent, and the index finger was placed on the trigger of the pistol, only a very slight motion of the whole was necessary to give the pressure required to fire a pistol. The weapon was braced against the inside of the thumb of the hand, and thus held firmly there as it stuck in the belt ready to be drawn and fired. When the water first fell from the ceiling, it soaked the covering of the wrist and hand, and swelled the wrist joint so that it became absolutely immovable. Next the moisture extended to the tip of the fingers, the hand being held somewhat downward. In the manikin we have here, the exact construction of the fingers and the movement of the joints of the hand and wrist can be plainly seen. In my working model I have imitated the mechanism of one finger, so arranging it that the least deflection of the finger from the straight line will be measured on a scale of millimetres. The joints are so constructed that any elongation of the pieces of wood will curve the line of joints away from the straight line which I have drawn on the board. I propose to experiment with this model so as to make it perfectly plain that my friend's death was accidental. If the experiment were tried on the manikin, and with a flint-lock pistol, it would doubtless fail ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. In the accident which caused my friend's death everything happened to be perfectly adjusted. If my model works, of course the manikin might have worked in exactly the same way."

The lieutenant gave his explanation of the position in which the body was found, and added that he had calculated at the time that the shot must have been fired from the direction of the manikin, and from about the height of its waist. He found in his notes the statement that the roof had leaked, and the manikin was wet. Furthermore, the pistol was found just where the recoil would have thrown it backward out of the manikin's hand. He ended by declaring that the theory just advanced was new to him then, and that he was convinced of its probability by the manner in which it harmonized with the conditions of the tragedy.

The professor proceeded next to give a full account of the expansion of wood by moisture, and went into the study of the whole phenomenon of capillary force. He was somewhat verbose in his statement, probably because he, like other regular lecturers, had been accustomed to spread a very little fact over a great deal of time. His closing argument in favor of the theory set forth by Benner was this: "In the ancient quarries wedges of wood were driven into holes in the rock, water was poured on the wedges, and the wood, expanding, split the solid mass. Capillary force is irresistible. It was this force which caused the deplorable accident which Mr. Benner has so ingeniously and logically explained."

At the command of the judge the

sculptor proceeded with his experiment. He simpily fastened the drawing-board with the mechanism to the bottom of the inside of the tub by means of screws. When it was in place it was covered by about an inch of water. The lieutenant then recorded on his note-book the time of day and the position of the index, and every one present made mental note of it. It was necessary, in order to give the wood sufficient time to swell, to leave it in the water for four or five hours. Consequently the judge adjourned the sitting until the afternoon at four o'clock. The room was locked and put in charge of the lieutenant and two men.

When the same company assembled at the appointed hour the door was opened by the lieutenant, and the judge, with genuine human curiosity, stepped up to the tub, looked into it, and gave an exclamation of surprise. The others approached and looked in. The lieutenant announced, almost triumphantly, that the index had moved seven millimetres—enough to have fired a cannon. The judge turned to the excited company and said, simply, "Messieurs, it was a capillary crime."

Claude Du Vall

THIS noted person was born at Domfront, in Normandy. His father was a miller, and his mother was descended from a worshipful race of tailors. He was brought up in the Catholic faith, and received an education suited to the profession for which he was intended, —namely, that of a footman. But, although his father was careful to train up his son in the religion of his ancestors, he was himself utterly without religion. He talked more of good cheer than of the church; of sumptuous feasts than of ardent faith; of good wine than of good works.

Du Vall's parents were exempted from the trouble and expense of rearing their son at the age of thirteen. We first find him at Rouen, the principal city of Normandy, in the character of a stable-boy. Here he fortunately found retour horses going to Paris: upon one of these he was permitted to ride, on condition of assisting to dress them at night. His expenses were likewise defrayed by some English travellers whom he met upon the road.

Arrived at Paris, he continued at the same inn where the Englishmen put up, and by running messages, or performing the meanest offices, subsisted for a while. He continued in this humble station until the restoration of Charles II., when multitudes from the continent resorted to England. In the character of a footman to a person of quality, Du Vall also repaired to England. The universal joy which seized the nation upon that happy event contaminated the morals of all: riot, dissipation, and

every species of profligacy abounded. The young and sprightly French footman entered keenly into these amusements. His funds, however, being soon exhausted, he deemed it no great crime for a Frenchman to exact contributions from the English. In a short time, he became so dexterous in his new employment, that he had the honor of being first named in an advertisement issued for the apprehending of some notorious robbers.

One day, Du Vall and some others espied a knight and his lady travelling alone in their coach. Seeing themselves in danger of being attacked, the lady resorted to a flageolet, and commenced playing, which she did very dexterously. Du Vall taking the hint, pulled one out of his pocket, began to play, and in this posture approached the coach. "Sir," said he to the knight, "your lady performs excellently, and I make no doubt she dances well; will you step out of the coach, and let us have the honor to dance a courant with her upon the heath?" "I dare not deny any thing, sir," replied the knight readily, "to a gentleman of your quality and good behavior; you seem a man of generosity, and your request is perfectly reasonable." Immediately the footman opened the door, and the knight came out. Du Vall leaped lightly off his horse, and handed the lady down. It was surprising to see how gracefully he moved upon the grass: scarcely a dancing-master in London but would have been proud to have shown such agility in a pair of pumps, as Du Vall evinced in a pair of French riding-boots. As soon as the dance was over, he handed the lady to the coach, but just as the knight was stepping in, "Sir," said he, "you forget to pay the music." His worship replied, that he never forgot such things, and instantly put his hand under the seat of the coach, pulled out one hundred pounds in a bag which he delivered to Du Vall, who received it with a very good grace, and courteously answered, "Sir you are liberal, and shall have no cause to regret your generosity; this hundred pounds, given so handsomely is better than ten times the sum taken by force. Your noble behavior has excused you the other three hundred pounds which you have in the coach with you." After this, he gave him his word that he might pass undisturbed, if he met any other of his crew, and then wished them a good journey.

At another time, Du Vall and some of his associates met a coach upon Blackheath, full of ladies, and a child with them. One of the gang rode up to the coach, and in a rude manner robbed the ladies of their watches and rings, and even seized a silver sucking bottle of the child's. The infant cried bitterly for its bottle, and the ladies earnestly entreated he would only return that article to the child, which he barbarously refused. Du Vall went forward to discover what detained his accomplice, and, the ladies renewing their entreaties to him, he instantly threatened to shoot his companion, unless he returned that article, saying, "Sirrah, can't you behave like a gentleman and raise a contribution without stripping people? but, perhaps, you had some occasion for the sucking-bottle, for, by your actions, one would imagine you were hardly weaned." This smart reproof had the desired effect, and Du

Vall, in a courteous manner, took his leave of the ladies.

One day Du Vall met Roper, master of the hounds to Charles II., who was hunting in Windsor Forest; and, taking the advantage of a thicket, demanded his money, or he would instantly take his life. Roper, without hesitation, gave him his purse, containing at least fifty guineas: in return for which, Du Vall bound him back and heal, tied his horse to a tree beside him, and rode across the country.

It was a considerable time before the huntsmen discovered their master. The squire, being at length released, made all possible haste to Windsor, unwilling to venture himself into any more thickets for that day, whatever might be the fortune of the hunt. Entering the town, he was accosted by Sir Stephen Fox, who inquired if he had any sport. "Sport!" replied Roper, in a great passion, "yes, sir, I have had sport enough from a villain who made me pay full dear for it; he bound me neck and heels, contrary to my desire, and then took fifty guineas from me to pay him for his labor, which I had much rather he had omitted."

England now became too contracted a sphere for the talents of our adventurer; and, in consequence of a proclamation issued for his detection, and his notoriety in the kingdom, Du Vall retired to his native country. At Paris he lived in a very extravagant style, and carried on war with rich travellers and fair ladies, and proudly boasted that he was equally successful with both; but his warfare with the latter was infinitely more agreeable, though much less profitable, than with the former.

There is one adventure of Du Vall at Paris, which we shall lay before our readers. There was in that city a learned Jesuit, confessor to the French king, who had rendered himself eminent, both by his politics and his avarice. His thirst for money was insatiable, and increased with his riches. Du Vall devised the following plan to obtain a share of the immense wealth of this pious father.

To facilitate his admittance into the Jesuit's company, he dressed himself as a scholar, and, waiting a favorable opportunity, went up to him very confidently, and addressed him as follows: "May it please your reverence, I am a poor scholar, who have been several years travelling over strange countries, to learn experience in the sciences, principally to serve mine own country, for whose advantage I am determined to apply my knowledge, if I may be favored with the patronage of a man so eminent as yourself." "And what may this knowledge of yours be?" replied the father, very much pleased. "If you will communicate any thing to me that may be beneficial to France, I assure you, no proper encouragement shall be wanting on my side." Du Vall, upon this, growing bolder, proceeded: "Sir, I have spent most of my time in the study of alchymy, or the transmutation of metals, and have profited so much at Rome and Venice, from great men learned in that science, that I can change several metals into gold, by the help of a philosophical powder which I can prepare very speedily."

The father confessor was more elated with this communication than all the discoveries he had obtained in the way

of his profession, and his knowledge even of his royal penitent's most private secrets gave him less delight than the prospect of immense riches which now burst upon his avaricious mind. "Friend," said he, "such a thing as this will be serviceable to the whole state, and particularly grateful to the king, who, as his affairs go at present, stands in great need of such a curious invention. But you must let me see some proof of your skill, before I credit what you say, so far as to communicate it to his majesty, who will sufficiently reward you, if what you promise be demonstrated." Upon this, the confessor conducted Du Vall to his house, and furnished him with money to erect a laboratory, and to purchase such other materials as were requisite, in order to proceed in this invaluable operation, charging him to keep the secret from every living soul. Utensils being fixed, and every thing in readiness, the Jesuit came to witness the wonderful operation. Du Vall took several metals and minerals of the basest sort, and put them in a crucible, his reverence viewing every one as he put them in. Our alchymist had prepared a hollow tube, into which he conveyed several sprigs of real gold; with this seeming stick he stirred the operation, which, with its heat, melted the gold, and the tube at the same time, so that it sank imperceptibly into the vessel. When the excessive fire had consumed all the different materials which he had put in, the gold remained pure, to the quantity of an ounce and a half. This the Jesuit ordered to be examined, and, ascertaining that it was actually pure gold, he became devoted to Du Vall, and, blinded with the prospect of future advantage, credited every thing our impostor said, furnishing him with whatever he demanded, in hopes of being made master of this extraordinary secret. Thus were our alchymist and Jesuit, according to the old saying, as "great as two pickpockets." Du Vall was a professed robber; and what is a court favorite but a picker of the people's pockets? So that it was two sharpers endeavoring to outsharp one another. The confessor was as candid as Du Vall could wish; he showed him all his treasures, and several rich jewels which he had received from the king; hoping, by these obligations, to incline him to discover his wonderful secrets with more alacrity. In short, he became so importunate, that Du Vall was apprehensive of too minute an inquiry, if he denied the request any longer: he therefore appointed a day when the whole was to be disclosed. In the mean time, he took an opportunity of stealing into the chamber where the riches were deposited, and where his reverence generally slept after dinner; finding him in deep repose, he gently bound him, then took his keys, and unhoarded as much of his wealth as he could carry off unsuspected; after which, he quickly took leave of him and France.

It is uncertain how long Du Vall continued his depredations after his return to England; but we are informed, that in a fit of intoxication he was detected at the Hole-in-the-Wall, in Chandos street, committed to Newgate, convicted, condemned, and executed at Tyburn, in the twenty-seventh year of his age, on the 1st of January 1669: and so much

had his gallantries and handsome figure rendered him the favorite of the fair sex, that many a bright eye was dimmed at his funeral; his corpse was bedewed with the tears of beauty, and his actions and death were celebrated by the immortal author of the inimitable Hudibras. He was buried with many flambeaux, amidst a numerous train of mourners, (most of them ladies,) in the middle aisle of the church in Covent Garden.

Sawney Beane

THE following narrative presents such a picture of human barbarity, that, were it not attested by the most unquestionable historical evidence, it would be rejected as altogether fabulous and incredible.

Sawney Beane was born in the county of East Lothian, about eight miles east of Edinburgh, in the reign of James I. of Scotland. His father was a hedger and ditcher, and brought up his son to the same laborious employment. Naturally idle and vicious, he abandoned that place in company with a young woman equally idle and profligate, and retired to the deserts of Galloway, where they took up their habitation by the sea-side. The place which Sawney and his wife selected for their dwelling was a cave of about a mile in length, and of considerable breadth, so near the sea, that the tide often penetrated into the cave above two hundred yards. The entry had many intricate windings and turnings, leading to the extremity of the subterraneous dwelling, which was literally "the habitation of horrid cruelty."

Sawney and his wife took shelter in this cave, and commenced their depredations. To prevent the possibility of detection, they murdered every person they robbed. Destitute also of the means of obtaining any other food, they resolved to live upon human flesh. Accordingly, when they had murdered any man, woman, or child, they carried them to their den, quartered them, salted the limbs, and dried them for food. In this manner they lived, carrying on their depredations and murder, until they had eight sons and six daughters, eighteen grandsons and fourteen granddaughters, all the offspring of incest.

But though they soon became numerous, yet such was the multitude which fell into their hands, that they had often superabundance of provisions, and would, at a distance from their own habitation, throw legs and arms of dried human bodies into the sea by night. These were often cast out by the tide, and taken up by the country people, to the great consternation and dismay of all the surrounding inhabitants. Nor could any one discover what had befallen the many friends, relations, and neighbors who had unfortunately fallen

into the hands of these merciless cannibals.

In proportion as Sawney's family increased, every one that was able acted his part in these horrid assassinations. They would sometimes attack four or six men on foot, but never more than two upon horseback. To prevent the possibility of escape, they would lie in ambush in every direction, that if they escaped those who first attacked, they might be assailed with renewed fury by another party, and inevitably murdered. By this means they always secured their prey, and prevented detection.

At last, however, the vast number who were slain roused the inhabitants of the country, and all the woods and lurking-places were carefully searched; yet, though they often passed by the mouth of the horrible den, it was never once suspected that any human being resided there. In this state of uncertainty and suspense concerning the authors of such frequent massacres, several innocent travellers and innkeepers were taken up on suspicion, because the persons who were missing had been seen last in their company, or had last resided at their houses. The effect of this well-meant and severe justice constrained the greater part of the innkeepers in those parts to abandon such employments, to the great inconvenience of those who travelled through that district.

Meanwhile, the country became depopulated, and the whole nation was at a loss to account for the numerous and unheard-of villanies and cruelties that were perpetrated, without the slightest clue to the discovery of the abominable actors. At length Providence interposed in the following manner to terminate the horrible scene. One evening, a man and his wife were riding home upon the same horse from a fair which had been held in the neighborhood, and, being attacked, the husband made a most vigorous resistance: his wife, however, was dragged from behind him, carried to a little distance, and her entrails instantly taken out. Struck with grief and horror, the husband continued to redouble his efforts to escape, and even trod some of the assassins down under his horse's feet. Fortunately for him, and for the inhabitants of that part of the country, in the mean time, twenty or thirty in a company came riding home from the fair. Upon their approach, Sawney and his bloody crew fled into a thick wood, and hastened to their infernal den.

This man, who was the first that had ever escaped out of their hands, related to his neighbors what had happened, and showed them the mangled body of his wife lying at a distance, the bloodthirsty wretches not having time to carry it along with them. They were all struck with astonishment and horror, took him with them to Glasgow, and reported the whole adventure to the chief magistrate of the city, who, upon this information, instantly wrote to the king, informing him of the matter.

In a few days, his majesty in person, accompanied by four hundred men, went in quest of the perpetrators of these horrible cruelties. The man, whose wife had been murdered before his eyes, went as their guide, with a great number of bloodhounds, that no possible means

might be left unattempted to discover the haunt of such execrable villains.

They searched the woods, and traversed and examined the sea-shore; but, though they passed by the entrance into their cave, they had no suspicion that any creature resided in that dark and dismal abode. Fortunately, however, some of the bloodhounds entered the cave, raising an uncommon barking and noise, an indication that they were about to seize their prey. The king and his men returned, but could scarcely conceive how any human being could reside in a place of utter darkness, and where the entrance was difficult and narrow; but, as the bloodhounds increased in their vociferation, and refused to return, it occurred to all that the cave ought to be explored to the extremity. Accordingly, a sufficient number of torches was provided; the hounds were permitted to pursue their course; a great number of men penetrated through all the intricacies of the path, and at length arrived at the residence of the horrible cannibals.

They were followed by all the band, who were shocked to behold a sight unequalled in Scotland, if not in any part of the universe. Legs, arms, thighs, hands, and feet, of men, women, and children, were suspended in rows like dried beef. Some limbs and other members were soaked in pickle; while a great mass of money, both of gold and silver, watches, rings, pistols, clothes, both linen and woollen, with an immense quantity of other articles, were either thrown together in heaps, or suspended upon the sides of the cave.

The whole cruel, brutal family, to the number formerly mentioned, were seized; the human flesh buried in the sand of the sea-shore; the immense booty carried away, and the king marched to Edinburgh with the prisoners. This new and wretched spectacle attracted the attention of the inhabitants, who flocked from all quarters to see, as they passed along, so bloody and unnatural a family, which had increased, in the space of twenty-five years, to the number of twenty-seven men and twenty-one women. Arrived in the capital, they were all confined in the Tolbooth under a strong guard, and were next day conducted to the common place of execution in Leith Walk, and executed without any formal trial, it being deemed unnecessary to try those who were avowed enemies of all mankind, and of all social order.

The enormity of their crimes dictated the severity of their death. The men had their entrails thrown into the fire, their hands and legs were severed from their bodies, and they were permitted to bleed to death. The wretched mother of the whole crew, the daughters, and grandchildren, after being spectators of the death of the men, were cast into three separate fires, and consumed to ashes. Nor did they, in general, display any signs of repentance or regret, but continued, with their last breath, to pour forth the most dreadful curses and imprecations upon all around, and upon those who were instrumental in consigning them to the hands of a tardy but a certain and inevitable justice.

Tracked by Trappers

CHAPTER I

THE ACQUAINTANCE I MADE ON BOARD THE "LORD WARDEN"

LAST spring I thought I would run over to Paris, a friend of mine, attaché to the British Legation, wanted me to see his mare Cantonnière run at Chantilly; so one morning I put myself in the express for Folkstone with a dear, dashing little widow (who was perusing *Bentley,* and asked me if I did not "think that fellow Ouida had been jilted by some woman, he was so spiteful on the beau sexe's shortcomings,") and got on board the *Lord Warden,* with Mills and the luggage and my bull-dog Pontos, who has a black patch over one eye, and might pass for a Chelsea pensioner in a state of Soul Transmigration. Much yachting has given me an ægis, thank Heaven! against any soupçon of mal de mer, and I leaned against the side of the deck looking at the passengers with Pontos looking out of his black patch, and making an inventory of them likewise, probably with a keen eye to business in the way of legs that might be snapped at with impunity. Ponto's mission in life was snapping at legs, and he naturally viewed people through that medium. Everybody looks through his own glass, be it a burnt or a Claude one, and will be shot if he will look through anybody else's. Why might not Pontos, too? Canine snapping at enemies' ankles is not more dangerous than human snapping at friends' characters and reputations, is it? There were a good many people on board: there were Smith, Brown, and Jones, of course, looking miserably ill, but talking of the Hopera and "'Ide Park" with sickly smiles. I never travel but I see *that* genus somewhere—wretched swells who make me ready to cut off my own moustaches in disgust, and dress in serge and sackcloth, when I see their horrible stubby caricatures, and their shocking onslaught on taste and ties. There were pretty girls in hats lisping Longfellow's poem on The Sea and petting infinitesimal terriers with shy glances at us, to show how they would pet *us,* if we would let them. There were a bride and bridegroom, who seemed to find romance uncommonly slow work with a rough sea, and a hard-hearted steward, and a small storm of smuts from the funnel, which seemed as destructive to the lady's temper as they decidedly were to her bonnet. There was a vieille file, who, on embarking, expressed her opinion that "it was beautiful," referring to the sea by that laudatory epithet, which fickle element felt the compliment so little, that, instead of returning it, it tossed her in ten minutes' time into the most complet antithesis of beauty that ever the female countenance could be imagined to present; and there was an odd, mean,

little old man, who appeared everlastingly occupied in looking at *me*. There was nothing remarkable about me that I knew of—nothing odd, I trusted—certainly nothing suspicious; I was not got up so elaborately as my friends the swells, to be sure: I had on a wide-awake, and a ribbon tie, and a Maude of the simplest shepherd plaid possible. Nothing queer about *them*, was there? But I certainly was an object of most extreme solicitude to this old fellow; he watched me furtively like a cat at a mouse-hole, and finally sidled up, and began speaking to me.

"Rough sea, sir, isn't it?"

Now I was too much of an Englishman not to look upon it as confounded impudence for him to address me, but I was still cosmopolitan enough to consider it only due to courtesy to reply, so I compromised the matter by giving a monosyllabic rejoinder:

"Rather!"

"Great traveller, perhaps, sir—don't mind it?" As he got no answer this time, he tried me with something else: "Fond of smoking, I see, sir? Very nice amusement, I dare say, when it don't make one sick? Wish I could do it, but I can't. That's an uncommonly handsome pipe of yours, sir?"

My pipe *was* handsome, and a singular one, too, insomuch as the bowl was curiously molded like a grinning faun's head, and I had had my crest put on it with my initials, and generally used it, though it was cumbersome in size.

"An uncommonly nice pipe," went on the loquacious little animal, eyeing me and the meerschaum as if we were something unparalleled and monstrous. "Going as far as Paris, may I ask?"

"No, sir, you may *not* ask, for it is no concern of yours," said I, knocking the ashes off the pipe, and looking at him.

I suppose my eyes expressed my thoughts, which were simply, "What the deuce do you mean by your impertinence?" for the old fellow gave a little chuckle, moved away, and I heard him mutter to himself, as if I were a runaway apprentice, and he was making out the items of my *personnel*, "Six feet as near as may be, brown moustaches, acquiline features, shepherd-plaid scarf, wide-awake, meerschaum with a faun's head and the letters L. V. H. on the bowl. Worth taking down, and keeping an eye upon, anyhow. I'll ask madame what *she* thinks. Mighty stiltified! We'll see if we can't take the rise out of him." And the little man shuffled away, taking his mem.-book out. What for? Not to enter mine and my meerschaum's appearance, surely? I was not outlawed for debt, or a secretary of a Bible Society flying with the guineas of Christian supporters to spend them over the water, nor a bank director cutting a rotten concern to go and set up a dashing hotel in the Champs Elysées with the tin of deluded shareholders. Take the rise out of *me?* I laughed at the little wretch's oddity, as Pontos gave a low growl after the departing legs he had not been permitted to snap at, and I put my pipe in my pocket and turned to take a walk up and down the deck. My curious interlocutor had disappeared, into the cabin possibly, and I walked up and down unmolested, thanking my stars I was not that unlucky bridegroom who between his own

sensations, his nouvelle mariée's temper, and the funnel's smuts, seemed to think he had better give up the ghost altogether, and find a watery grave under the paddle-wheels. And as I walked I saw, just coming out of the cabin, a lady, tripping across the deck as safely as if it had been a ball-room floor, and showing the most charming little brodequins in the transit, finally nestling herself among a pile of cushions, like a silky little dog in its basket (or a Nereid in the curl of a wave, my dear young sir, if you prefer poetic similes, in which case, *par parenthèse,* I would beg to refer you to Mr. Coventry Patmore, who carries poetry into the kitchen, and makes verses upon burst boilers and other domesticities of a like character, with a ponderous playfulness quite marvellous—so marvellous that, like a certain dexterous coup d'état, we would rather not see it imitated, we think)—well, my lady was an exceedingly pretty little one, as pretty as her brodequins; and as she lay curled on her cushions, with a French novel and a smelling-bottle in her small, plump, bien ganté hands, with her shining crêpé hair and her bright, sparkling, inquisitive eyes, like a marmoset's—and her pretty carnation cheeks, and I was just thinking to myself what a godsend the bewitching little creature was, and going to address her with some commonplace or other, pour commencer, when up she started, with a little scream, and both hands extended: "Ah! vous voilà! Mon Dieu, comme je suis enchantée! Nous sommes deux feuilles volantes, et nous voilà recontrées par hasard encore une fois!"

Here was somebody who knew me decidedly, but where the deuce had I seen her? She met me with the greatest animation—I might say ecstasy, if it didn't sound vain—she recognized me clearly, and, what was more, seemed delighted to do so, and I hadn't the faintest conception of ever having seen her face before! There I stood, holding her hands of course, and looking down at her, wondering where the deuce I had met her, raking up every place I'd ever been in, from the Closerie des Lilas to the Salt Lake, and trying to remember every woman I'd ever seen, from the peeresses at Almack's to the cantinières in the Crimea. It was not a bit of use; I didn't recollect her, and I couldn't, but I was scarcely going to tell her so, comme vous concevez, so I pressed her cream-colored gloves warmly, paid her a compliment on her looks, told her I was enchanted to see her—which was perfecty true, for I thought a little mild flirtation would while away the time very pleasantly in the train to Paris, if she were going there; and, finally, sat down by her, talking away as if we were old friends, without the faintest shadow of an idea who the devil she was. She might be a serene highness of Something-Schwerin, she might be a danseuse out of the Haymarket; she might be a foreign princess with countless titles; she might be a little adventuress with only paste rings; I didn't know, and, what's much more, I didn't care: she knew me, and was extremely pleasant with me, and was a gay, légère, agreeable, very pretty little woman—a dangerous one, very likely, on further acquaintance—but I had eaten too much wheat in my day to fear

being caught with chaff, and I sat on the bench beside her, the envied of Brown, Jones and Robinson, I doubt not, and talked away to this charming friend of mine, whom I'd never come across before, to the best of my own knowledge, though she was evidently as intimate as could be with me, so intimate that I began to think my memory must be failing me, or that the Bass I had taken at Folkestone must have had a dash of Lethe in it, that I couldn't anyway remember those bright, brown, marmoset eyes, and that piquant nez retroussé, whose owner retained so flattering a recollection of me.

"Last August," thought I, "where the deuce was I? In Perthshire, I'd swear, knocking over the grouse with Fairlie. I haven't been at Ems for five years and more." But, place aux dames!—if they don't stick to truth we mustn't always be telling them so, or we should eternally be guilty of the rudeness of contradiction; so I asked her a counter query, if she thought it possible for any living man to forget any days he'd had the happiness of spending with her?

"Fi donc, bécasse!" she cried, giving me a blow with her ivory-handled parasol, and laughing a gay, musical laugh. "Do you suppose I believe that? Not a word of it. I remember you too well of old! Poor D'Aguilar, do you remember him that night at your petit souper—he had lost at the roulette—and what fun we made of him? Have you ever seen him since?"

"D'Aguilar? No, I don't think I have," said I. Now, to the best of my belief, I'd never known a man of the name, but he might have made an impression on her and none on me, so I let *that* pass and thought what a very pretty figure she was as she lay back on the cushions, taking the perfume from her flacon, which had Jockey Club at one end of it, and I've a shrewd suspicion sal volatile at the other, as certain clever Essayists we know of have refreshing rationalism for those who can appreciate it at one end of their pen, but a little drop of orthodoxy still at the other to assuage their bishop's qualms and preserve their social preferments. (Query: Is that their fault after all? If Truth paid a little better and Profession a little worse, shouldn't we have more of the one and less of the other? Il faut vivre, and so—men hold their tongues.)

"And are you going on to Paris, mon cher?" asked my new acquaintance, or rather my old friend. "Ah, you are, then? I am very glad of that, you can see me through that horrid douane, and we can go on to Paris together. And what have you been doing with yourself? losing your money after those stupid horses, and risking your neck after foxes, and making love to all the pretty women you've met, and forgetting me, your best friend?"

Now positively she'd hit so exactly on my occupations, that, with the greatest effrontery in the world, I couldn't have told her she was wrong; and as for forgetting her, I certainly had done that with a completeness only equal to that with which your oldest chum who has gone to the Bad, invariably forgets that "little bill," or that "mere bagatelle" he borrowed of you on the strength of the old Eton and Cambridge days. So I made her another pretty indefinite speech that sounded a

good deal, but, sifted, meant nothing, as several speeches do, forensic, ministerial, post-prandial, and others; and while the *Lord Warden* puffed across the Channel, and Pontos snapped at each stewardess as she passed him, and the nouveaux mariés looked at each other as if in mute but stern demand why a Margate moon wouldn't have done as well as a Boulogne one for their lune de miel, my friend and I flirted pleasantly in that silvery Gallic tongue, best of all for coquetry or repartee, till the steamer ploughed her way into the Anglo-French port.

"Take care of my luggage a moment," said she; "I have left my handerchief in the cabin. No! I would rather go for it myself."

And down she went, while I, with her maid, guarded the boxes, at which I hastily darted a glance and read, "Madame la Comtesse de Coquelicot."

"Coquelicot! Coquelicot!" I'd never heard the name in my life; but, however, I wouldn't tell her so. I was in for the acquaintance, and I knew very well how to take care of myself and my purse; beside, Madame de Coquelicot was very pretty, and extremely agreeable to me. As I was looking at them I thought I heard somebody say sharply, "Vous ne voyez pas plus loin que votre nez. Laissez-moi faire et je lue ferai voir du pays. Prenez garde qu'il ne verrouille pas, c'est tout ce que vous avez à faire!" I thought it sounded like my countess's voice, but it couldn't be, for she just then stood by my elbow bidding me take all the trouble, and mind the douaniers didn't touch her boxes, or she would never speak to me again.

CHAPTER II

HOW, NOT OWING A CENTIME, I WAS STILL PLUNGED INTO DEBT

Of course I saw her through the douane and into the train, which was just starting for Paris, and got in myself. She was a very agreeable woman. No possible harm could come of a little civility to her on a journey; if she was a dame d'industrie, I wasn't a boy, to let her lighten my pockets; I had known too many comtesses, baronnes, marquises. So I sat opposite to her in the same carriage with the rector, who wrapped himself in a great-coat and that customary hedgehog *noli me tangere* seclusion common to habitants of the Britannic Isles, and went to sleep, and a lady and her daughter, at whom—the girl beating her out and out for beauty—I saw madame cast certain contemptuous irritated glances. Did you ever see any woman look pleasantly at another if she was pretty, or speak well of her by any chance? *I* never did. Ladies may admit some possibility of virtue in a plain sister, but in an attractive one never. Teresa Yelverton has *our* sympathy and admiration, but wouldn't her own sex have loved to stone her if they *could* have found a flaw, for her one unpardonable sin, poor little dear! in being attractive, talented, and fascinating? Arria Pœtus might be as pure, as noble, as self-devoted as she would, but I don't doubt that the Roman ladies, en petit comité, hated her for the admiration she excited, and tried their best to put some "bad construction" even on the heroic "Pœte non dolet" of a nature too high and

loving for them to be able to measure or understand, or do anything but vent their spite in throwing stones at it!

The train whisked on, and madame settled herself in her compartment looking as fresh and crisp and as charmingly got up as if she'd just come out of her boudoir instead of off the *Lord Warden,* and chatted away so familiarly that I felt quite sure she must have known me all her life, though to the best of my belief I'd never seen her till an hour before. She called me "Mon cher" and "mon garçon," and evidently was so well acquainted with me that it would have been a height of discourtesy to tell her the reciprocity was all on one side, as the Irishmen have it, and that I had no more remembrance of her than I had of the pointsman or the guard.

So we talked away very pleasantly, those quick handsome brown eyes of hers scanning me so intently when I appeared not to be looking at her, and professing themselves under their curled lashes so perfectly innocent of intending any such scrutiny when I did regard her, that I began to be a little intrigué as to what possible interest I could possess for her, and to think I must be a more interesting personage than I had ever flattered myself before. It was between four and five when we hissed and snorted and puffed into the Paris station. I put my little comtesse into a carriage that was waiting for her, a very dashing carriage, with a pair of fretting bays, three parts thorough-bred, that wouldn't have made a bad figure in the Ring, and had the tenderest poignée de main that ever such little cream-gloved fingers gave a man, as Madame de Coquelicot said most amiably,

"Come and see me to-morrow, mon ami. No! not this evening, I am too tired; but to-morrow as early as you like. The old quarters, you know."

"Where the deuce are they?" thought I, as I said aloud, "The old quarters? Let me see, what is the exact address?"

"Numéro quinze, Rue Belphégor-et-Mélusine, quartier du Diable Boiteux —don't you remember? Adieu, and au revoir!"

And madame waved me her hand and bade her coachman drive off, and I laughed as I turned away to think how entirely I'd forgotten my fair friend, or how cleverly the little woman pretended to an intimacy with me, for some purport or other, that remained hidden in the leaves of fate. "I'll see that farce to the end. I'm not a young bird to be trapped and plucked, and she's certainly pretty enough to take the trouble of calling on her," I thought to myself, as I walked to the voiture Mills had summoned. As I jumped into it I dropped my stick. Somebody picked it up, and as I thanked him I saw it was the little man whom I had snubbed so unceremoniously on board the *Lord Warden.* "You are quite welcome, sir; good evening," he said, shuffling off to his own cab. And when I was set down at the rooms where I generally stay when in Paris, who should stand on the pavé, watching me curiously, but the old fellow again, or his ghost —a very seedy-looking ghost, too, with a disreputable air, redolent of Whitecross Street, Leicester Square, Homburg, and all refuges for those whom

fortune won't smile upon, and whose characters are usually purified with the ablution known as whitewash—watching me, certainly watching me, though he did his best not to be seen. Why had I all of a sudden become so extreme an object of interest to these people? Did they take me for the Comte de Chambord come to steal surreptitiously into the Tuileries to take the crown from that clever fellow who is in his own *deus ex machinâ*, and seems to have stolen Atropos's scissors and to be snipping the thread long and short, as it amuses him, for everybody in Europe? Did they fancy I'd come to fire off bombs like Orsini, or to dabble in giant frauds like Law or Mirès? Had I anything odd about me? Had I murdered anybody without knowing it? entered into a conspiracy without remembering? become a célèbre without being aware of it? joined a secret society and broken my oath without recollecting it? The people of the hotel didn't seem to find anything peculiar in me; they recognized me, indeed, but in no unpleasant manner, as their recognition resulted in as good a dinner and as choice wines as ever gladdened a man's soul, over which I forgot all about the acquaintance on board the *Lord Warden*, and after which I drove to the Jockey Club, found up my old chums, went to the Opera to see a new danseuse in "Satanella," supped at the Maison Dorée, and finally went back to the Hôtel de Londres in the gray of the spring morning, which was just light enough for me to see two men dodging me from the café—which it was easy to do, for my driver was an Alsatian and sleepy, and let his horse creep at his will—two men whom I heard whisper,

"C'est lui—sans, doute c'est, lui—— au moins à perte de vue. Il faut faire le bec à monsieur——"

I lost the rest, but what the deuce did they know about me? and to whom were they going to give a cue as if I'd escaped from a lunatic asylum and was required to be recaptured? It was too dark to see, but one of them looked deucedly like my little old man of the steamer; but what possible interest on earth could I have for them? I owed no man anything, nobody could pull me up for debt—not even for a case of Havanas, or a pair of gloves, unpaid for; it was vastly odd to be dodged in this style, as if detectives were at my heels for embezzlement. But I was too tired to think much about it, so I turned in and went to sleep, by no means uncertain that I shouldn't be woke up like Changarnier in the middle of the night, and marched off by gendarmerie, possibly to find myself located in Brest, or Toulon, for some capital crime of which I'd forgotten being the perpetrator.

When the morning rose, I remembered my engagement to Madame de Coquelicot, my pretty little friend who knew so much about me, and of whom I knew nothing, and was just going into my coffee, omelette, claret, sardines, and all the rest of it, and looking over the *Times* and *Charivari* in my own room preparatory to calling on her, when Mills tapped at the door.

"If you please, sir, there's a man here who wants to see you."

"See me! What for?"

"He says he wants to see you about some wine, sir—three dozen of Marcobrunnen as is owing for."

"Owing for? Nonsense. Never bought any Marcobrunnen by the dozen in my life. He's made a mistake; go and tell him so."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but he says you *do* owe it him, sir, and he won't go without it," said Mill, returning.

"Deuce take his impudence! he's made some mistake, I tell you; he must have the wrong name."

"No, sir, he hasn't got the wrong name; leastways, not wrong as the French would pronounce it. He asked me for Monsieur Hervey, and here's the bill if you will please to look at it."

"Take the bill to the deuce," said I, "and don't come bothering me. I don't owe a centime in Paris; tell him so, and that if he doesn't go about his business we shall call in the police."

Mills departed on his mission, and I lighted my meerschaum to have a quiet smoke, but peace was not for me; there came another tap at the door, and Mills ventured in again, every lineament of his countenance replete with injured dignity and noble indignation.

"What's the row, Mills? Won't the fellow go?"

"Yes, sir, *he's* gone; but, sir, he had the impudence to say he'd have the law upon you; he did, indeed, sir, for a paltry three dozen of hock!"

It was the horrible insignificance of the debt that overwhelmed Mills. If it had been a few thousands, now, he wouldn't have felt lowered by it; he was accustomed to live with gentlemen who, if they got into difficulties, got into them en roi, and who, if they went to the dogs, drove on that unpleasant road au grand galop, with postilions, and outriders, and all the rest of it, comme il faut.

"For a debt I don't owe; that's a good idea. He'll have to prove my identity first, and his own claim afterwards. What you mean by listening to such fellows, I can't imagine, Mills. You should send them to the right-about without coming to trouble me."

"But, sir, if you please, sir, there's another one now—from a M. Follet's, of the Rue Vivienne—about some coats and vests, sir, that he says you had of him this time last year."

"God bless me! are all the Parisians gone mad? I owe no debts here—not a sou. It's a pleasant thing, certainly, if tradesmen can saddle foreigners with bills in this style! What the deuce do they mean by it?"

"Then you won't look at the bill if you please, sir?"

"Certainly not. It is nothing to me. Go and turn the fellows out this moment, or let them find their right debtor. This is a pretty state of things! to be besieged by creditors the minute one sets foot——"

But my peroration was cut short. Through the door which Mills had left open a little burst a wiry, excitable, voluble, and indelibly wronged little man, who pounced upon me with wild alacrity.

"Ah, monsieur, vous voilà attrapé! Payez-nous cela—cinq cent quatre-vingt-douze francs. Voyez vous! voilà une année entière que nous vous avons attendu. Cinq cent quatre-vingt-douze

francs. Regardez le mémoire: un habit, un Talma, un——"

"Allez-vous en!" said I, repressing a strong impulse to laugh—an impulse which I believe, lowered me irremediably in Mills's eyes. "Allez-vous en! je ne vous dois pas un sou. Je ne suis jamais entré dans votre magasin. Comment osez-vous——"

"Quoi," shrieked the little emissary of M. Follet. "Vous ne nous devez rien? Oh, monstre d'Anglais! vous ne nous devez rien? Mais regardez donc le mémoire!"

"Au diable le mémoire, et vous aussi! Quittez ma chambre à l'instant, ou j'appellerai," I began, taking my pipe out of my mouth, fairly exasperated. "Mills, why don't you turn that fellow out; he is subject to the law already, for assaulting me in this manner." The little fellow did not wait to be turned out; the bully and the coward generally unite in one person, they say, and I suppose the vision of single combat with two monstres d'Anglais was too much for him.

"Vous avez refusé de me payer, et vous m'avez menacé. C'est bien, monsieur! Nous verrons!"

And he clattered down the stairs, signed thither in a lordly and imperious manner by Mills, as fast as his little feet would carry him; and as he went we heard a diminuendo cataract of "Affreux menteur! — Abominable scélérat!" etc., etc., in his shrill, vociferous, little voice, and I told Mills to get my hat and gloves, thinking decidedly that Paris folk had gone mad, and that I had become the special object of their insane fury. I'd fallen into a nest of people who evidently knew more about me than I knew myself, and I wondered if I should find any Q. E. D. to the problem at Madame de Coquelicot's, as I got into a Hansom and bade the driver take me to No. 15, Rue Belphégor-et-Mélusine, quartier du Diable Boiteux, of which fashionable faubourg, if you are ignorant, I beg leave to hint that you know nothing of Paris.

CHAPTER III

HOW I FELL AMONG THIEVES

It was a very handsome house, but one which, though madame had alluded to it as old quarters very familiar to me, I had never been in, to my knowledge. I inquired for madame. The porter answer, "Oui, monsieur, elle est chez elle. Montez au premier, s'il vous plaît;" and au premier I went accordingly, where I was received by an exceedingly resplendent valet who appeared to know perfectly who I was without my telling him. The deuce, I thought, it was uncommonly odd everybody knew me here, and I could recollect nobody! But I had no time to reflect upon it, for the valet flung the door open, and I was ushered into the presence of my Comtesse de Coquelicot. If she had looked charming on the deck of the *Lord Warden,* she looked ten thousand times more so now, sitting in a dormeuse, clad in the daintiest négligé possible to devise, with cobweb lace about her throat and wrists, and gold-broidered slippers on her feet, as pretty a tableau as a man could want, reading her yellow-papered-roman, and stirring the cream into some chocolate that stood on a little

silver service by her side: a very pretty tableau indeed—too pretty, for me to have so utterly forgotten it if I had ever seen it before! She rose to meet me with her hands outstretched, and so sweet a smile, that I could scarcely fail to greet her with equal warmth.

"Well, mon cher," said the Comtesse, seating herself, giving me a delicate blow with her roman, and signing me to a chair by her, "so you have kept your appointment, and come to see me?"

"Do you suppose any man could fail to come and see you if you'd let him?" said I, thinking to myself what a deucedly pretty woman she was without her bonnet.

"Ah, béta! you have been long enough without coming to see me," laughed madame. "It was very shabby of you, caro, to run off from Ems as you did!"

"Run off from Ems! Decidedly the little woman's mad," thought I.

"We were very happy at Ems, caro!" sighed madame, with a pretty pathetic air. "Isn't it a pity that beau jours like those won't last forever?"

Of course I answered her suitably, to the effect that any days in her society must be the plus beaux jours of his life to any man, and our tête-à-tête was going on â ravir. I was completely bewildered by her constant references to a past with which I ought to have been as well acquainted as she, but of which I could not, for the life of me, remember a word: but as I said before, she was far too pretty a woman for any man to disclaim a friendship she claimed with him, and we were going on à ravir, when every nerve in my system received as violent a galvanic shock as ever any luckless *rus in urbe* received at the Polytechnic, and I started as though the most horrible douche that ever the water cure gave to any victim surrendered to its grasp had struck me with an arm of ice, when my little comtesse, looking at me under her fringed lashes, and closing her soft warm hand on mine, whispered, sweetly,

"Mon cher! would it be inconvenient to you to *pay me those seven thousand francs you lost to me at écarté last August?*"

I am a cool fellow generally, I believe; used to flatter myself that nothing could startle me; that if I possessed nerves in common with the rest of humanity, they were of that texture commonly denominated cast iron; but I can say so no longer, for when the Comtesse spoke those words, a child, had there been one in the room disposed to so puglistic an enterprise, might have knocked me down. Plon-plon's fit of eloquence could not surprise France, nor their sudden notoriety bewilder the Bishop of Durham and his beau-fils, nor the Seven Essayists' free speech amaze the legend-loving Church, more utterly than Madame de Coquelicot's speech surprised, bewildered and horrified me. I stared at her, and mechanically re-echoed, "Seven thousand francs—I—lost—to you!"

She shook her head at me, and gave me another rebuking blow with Le Brun's yellow volume.

"Ah, méchant! Do you pretend to

forget it? Fi donc! for shame! You recollect well enough!"

"On my honor, madame——"

She shook her head again, and laughed, gaily:

"Ah, bon Dieu! your honor, mon cher, is not a very wonderful witness. If you've no better gage than your honor, mon garçon——"

This was going a little bit too far: we *do* let women say more than men, but there are limits to one's allowance even to the female tongue. I shook off her hand, and got out of the chair.

"Madame, you do not know what you are saying, nor can you, I think, know whom you are addressng. There must be some very extraordinary mistake here. On my word, as a gentleman, I never——"

But she interrupted me with peals of laughter.

"That will do, très cher! *You* do not know what you are saying, or you would scarcely try to talk that nonsense to me. You will say you never played écarté at all with me, I suppose, next?"

"To the best of my knowledge, I decidedly never did, madame. I repeat, again, that you are speaking under some very extraordinary delusion."

"Do be quiet, bécasse; you make me laugh too much!" cried the Comtesse, beginning to look rather angry, though with a nasty glitter in her eyes, beating an impatient tattoo with her spoon on the Sérves saucer. You may generally know your suppressed vixen by that sort of angry rataplan; she beats an inanimate object when she would love, if she could, to be beating you. "I like you very much, mon ami, but I did not like your running off from Ems in my debt, and I don't like your pretence of ignorance now. I shall be very glad if you will pay me those seven thousand francs without delay, for I am extravagant—comme vous savez bien—and they will fill up a little gap nicely."

"But, by Heaven, I owe you none. I never played écarté with you in my life. I never was at Ems last August——"

"Hush, hush, hush!" cred madame, her tattoo getting fiercer and her laugh louder. "What will you say next? Never played écarté! never at Ems! Grand Dieu! what next?"

"Anything you like, madame; and, first of all, that I am not a boy to be tricked in this way, and be frightened into paying a debt I never contracted. I suppose I have been fool enough to come amongst a gang of swindlers, but I am not so great a one as to stay amongst them. Another time, madame, try the trick on some younger bird, though it is an adroit one, I admit, and allow me to have the honor of wishing you a very good morning!" said I, backing to the door, too disgusted with my own tomfoolery in coming there at all to remember courtesy or anything else. Tomfoolery, indeed! As I put my hand on the lock of the door I found it was fastened on the other side, and that I, who ought to have known better than to have come there at all, was, as I richly deserved to be, a prisoner in the Comtesse de Coquelicot's drawing-room.

She nodded her head with devilish

delight, laughing again, though her dark eyes scintillated angrily.

"The windows are twenty feet from the ground, mon cher. Ah! bécasse, now we have caught you again, do you think we should be so silly as to let you go so easily. You mistake! Have you quite forgotten all those bills and bonds at Ems, caro?"

"Bills and bonds!" I repeated, contemptuously. "On my life, this is carrying things too far! You mistake. *I* am not your victim, madame," said I, only keeping myself cool by recollecting my combatant was a woman. "I shall be obliged by your putting an end to this, and ordering your servants to unlock this door. I presume you are aware that by detaining me thus, the law—"

"The law! Ah! you wish for the law. C'est bien!" cried madame clapping her plump and jewelled hands.

I suppose it was a preconcerted signal, for a door I had not noticed at the other end of the salon opened softly, and a man curled and ringed, a Jew all over, came noiselessly in, with another insignificant fellow, neither of whom had I ever seen before, and, coming up to me and laying his hand on my shoulder, the latter whispered the lively and agreeable information,

"Monsier, in the name of the law I arrest you."

"Arrest me! The deuce! What for?"

"For the several sums of seven thousand francs, twenty thousand francs, and fifteen thousand francs, borrowed in the months of June, July, and August, from Alcide Mathieu," began the fellow, with such abominable legal precision and audacity that, à la David, the fire kindled and I spake more furiously than perchance was prudent.

Shaking off his grasp with a jerk that span him off into the middle of the room, "What the deuce do you mean by this tomfoolery? I owe nobody a sou, and you know that as well as I do. You are a league of rascally sharpers, but if you fancy to trap or frighten me into admitting your charges and letting you pick my pockets, you are exceedingly mistaken. You are a gang of swindlers, and as such I will cite you before the——"

"Oh, l'effronté!" shriek Madame de Coquelicot. "Mon dieu! who could think any living mortal could have such audacious impudence, when he knows ——"

"Knows!" chuckled the individual of jewels and curls, who I conjectured was the aforesaid Alcide Mathieu. "Something he will know when——"

"Doucement, doucement, madame," said the miniature Vidocq, who having got me into the griffes of the law, was scarcely going to let me off so easily. "Take care, or you will commit yourself for libel as well. Diantre!" said he, turning to me, "it is of no use resisting. Come, monsieur, do not oblige me to make a scene. Come with me quietly, like a gentleman. You have given us a great deal of trouble. If you would have settled these little matters privately with Monsieur Mathieu six months ago——"

The cool impudence of the fellow positively stunned me. I, who had never seen any one of them in my life, to be told I had given them a great

deal of trouble, that I should have settled these little matters—little matters, forsooth!—six months ago! I, who flattered myself that I was a cool hand, and knew life, if anybody knew it, to have let myself be trapped into this by that little demon, De Coquelicot! The devil within me was roused, and nothing short of knocking them all down would have cooled me in the least. As the fellow came up to lay his hand on me again, I set my back to the door and prepared to receive them scientifically.

"If you attempt to lay a hand on me again I shall knock you down. You are a gang of swindlers, and if you refuse to unlock the door, I will throw open the window, call in the police, and give you into custody——"

"Ah ha! that is your game!" said the man, with a smile, moving himself to the window and giving a low whistle, while M. Mathieu, with a laugh, laid his grasp on my arms to pinion them behind me, and the Comtesse lay back in her dormeuse, laughing shrilly in concert. But that was rather too much of a good thing. There *are* limits to human endurance, and before he could touch me, I knocked him over with a tap on the face.

"Ah ha! for debt, for assault, for libel," murmured the other man, with a purr of enjoyment at the prospect of three such charges combined against one individual, as the door behind me opened with a jerk that made me stagger forward, and I fell helpless into the stern grasp of two gendarmes, who, I presume, at their commandant's whistle, had come upstairs to cope with so bellicose and restive a prisoner.

"Will you go quietly now, monsieur!" asked he, while my soi-distant creditor rose slowly from the floor, wiping the blood from his face and head with muttered oaths of vengeance.

It was no use *not* going quietly. I didn't want to blacken my name by being shown up in an assault like some tipsy youngster. It was no earthly good talking sense to these rascals; they'd the best of it at present, and the only way to get the game into my own hands was to state the case to some sensible judge, who would give me a hearing and listen to the circumstances. Of course, in no court could they make out their case, and it was a perfect bewilderment to me what sort of game they could mean to be playing, or why they should have pounced upon me as the victim of it—an Englishman only just landed in France, of whom they couldn't possibly know anything. So I went quietly, and the whole of the Rue Belphégor-et-Mélusine, from the sixième to the rez-de-chausée of each domicile, appeared to me to have turned out to witness my convoy by gendarmes. There were ladies opening their jalousies to peep at me, children running out on the balconies to laugh at me, gamins loitering in the gutters to make fun of me, grim porters coming to the grilles to stare at me, while I swore *sotto voce* like a trooper at my own confounded folly in letting myself be trapped by that odious little Coquelicot, when there were fifty handsomer women in Paris, too! into such a ridiculous and apparently inextricable a scrape. However, I went quietly, not exactly enjoying my new position, but

making the best of it with Tapleyan philosophy, consoling myself with the reflection that I should scarcely be put out of the world, like Mrs. Dombey, without making an effort, and that I, an Englishman, with friends by the dozen among the French noblesse and at the British Legation, would scarcely let myself be treated in this style without kicking up a dust about it, even if that dust were the whirlwind that should blow up the Anglo-French alliance.

It was three o'clock before I was taken into court, where, or by what rules, on my life I hardly know now, it was so bewildering an affair that I took little note of particulars. The interval was passed by me as you, my sympathetic reader, can easily imagine, in much such a state of virtuous indignation as the Z. G. lion exhibits when his keeper makes him wait too long for his dinner. There were my accusers: the fat man with the jewels and curls, desperately, villainously Jewish, with a bandage on his forehead, which afforded me fiendish delight; there was pretty, gaily dressed, highly rouged Madame de Coquelicot, as witness, I suppose; there was my old man of the steamer; there was the wine merchant's agent; there was the tailor and his emissary; there was everybody arrayed in grim and inexorable array; and there was I, charged there with debt, assault, and libel. Wasn't it pleasant? and, for the commencement of a first day in Paris, hadn't it a nice couleur de rose aspect? How bitterly I swore at myself! Surely those oaths were as pardonable, under the circumstances, as Uncle Toby's!

I'd never been in a French court in my life. I didn't know who was who, nor how the proceedings were likely to commence. Somebody—I think the judge—eyed me fiercely. I daresay he thought me a hardened sinner; perhaps he'd been a refugee in his time, and had been up at Bow, or Westminster, and enjoyed the opportunity of retaliating a little on a son of Albion. He began in a stern voice:

"Vous, Léonce Victor Hervé——"

I put up my eye-glass and stared at him—an act which he seemed to consider an impertinence. I wonder why. I've put up that self-same eye-glass at some of the best women in the peerage, at her Majesty herself, lounging on the rails or driving down the Ring, and none of *them* took it as an offence.

"Hallo, sir," said I, "wait a minute. That isn't my name."

"Do not address the court in that impertinent manner, sir. What do you intend to imply by so singular a remark as that it is 'not your name'?"

"I mean what I say, and there's nothing singular about it" said I, heedless of the indignation with which everybody was regarding me for venturing to interrupt the court. "It's *not* my name. I'm an Englishman, and am called Leonard Villiers Hervey, as you can see in my passport; and as my friends—the British ambassador himself, if you very much prefer him—will swear to you at any moment. I have been brought here on some false pretences, charged with false debts, under, as I see now, a false name. It is either a conspiracy or a case of mistaken identity. In either circumstance I shall expect to be indemnified for the

trouble, annoyance, and insult to which I have been subject this morning, or shall I decidedly complain to the British Legation of the abominable manner is which a British subject is liable to be treated by a gang of French swindlers the moment he sets foot in Paris."

I hurled my words at him in the fiercest passion I ever was in in my life. I certainly astonished an audience then, if anybody ever did. The judge stared, the gendarmes stared, Madame de Coquelicot, the man of curls and rings, the wine-merchant, the tailor, everybody stared at me in my passionate peroration, and I caught the Comtesse's gasping whisper:

"Qui aurait pu croire qu'il y en eût un autre qi res semblât tant à Léonce, et qu'un Anglais pût si bien parler le Francais? Ah mon Dieu! je vois trop tard que ses yeux sont gris au lieu d'être bleus!"

* * * * *

It was a case of mistaken identity, luckily not so fatal to life or reputation as such a case has been more than once to some poor devil pulled up for a chance resemblance to another spirit worse off than himself. Two of my best friends—one French, one English—to whom I had sent, entered just at that minute, and corroborated my statement, which after some delay and trouble, with sight of my passport, sufficed to clear me from the charge of M. Léonce Victor Hervé's debts, though I am bound to say that the vigilant gentleman before whom I had been brought was desperately reluctant to let me go, and as intensely anxious to make me in the wrong, if he in any way could, as any lady to talk away the character of her pet friend or democrat to saddle a nobleman with all the sins of the Decalogue, and wouldn't let me off till he'd gone into it all from beginning to end, about fifty-six several times, in an examination which, frightfully as it bored me afforded me much unchristian delight by the evident torture it was to my persecutors, whose characters were probably not such as to render legal investigation highly acceptable. It seemed that Mr. Mathieu was a money-lender, brother to Madame Coquelicot a widow, but not of a Count; that in the August before, at Ems, a luckless fellow had borrowed of the one, been bewitched of the other, and, I presume, been so driven to desperation between them that he had cut the concern, and fled unseen from Ems, owing the little widow his play debts, and her brother several sums, which M. Mathieu had lent him, knowing him to be a man of some fortune, and for which he held his I. O. U.'s and bonds. They were sharps, sans doute, but probably M. Hervé must have been rather a disreputable fellow too, and their anxiety had naturally been to catch him again and sue him. The little fellow on board the steamer was a man sometimes employed by them to hunt down their lost prey, and who, when he saw me on board the *Lord Warden*, with a meerschaum and a Maude, like those M. Hervé was in the habit of sporting, duly notified the fact to Madame below in the cabin, who, coming on board, recognized me at once as she thought, and set her little wits to work

to enthral me in her fascinations till M. Mathieu should have legal traps ready, setting the old man to watch me wherever I went, who, in turn, apprised a wine-merchant and a tailor of my arrival, whom he knew to be creditors of M. Hervé, receiving, of course, a percentage for his information. So ran the story, simply enough, intensely as it had bewildered me, as it still bewildered Madame Coquelicot, who could do nothing during the examination but sniff at her flacon, and murmur, in humiliation, "Mon Dieu, comme j'ai été bête! Pourquoi n'ai-je pas remarqué que ses yeux étaient gris? Mais la ressemblance est extraordinaire tout le même?"

They sued me for assault, and I had to pay M. Mathieu something heavy for the pleasure of knocking him down; but I sued them for false imprisonment, so I had a *quid pro quo*, and we were quits. My fellow sufferer, with a Maude, a meerschaum, and a face like mine, I have never seen to my knowledge. I have given you noms de plume, pour cause; but I look eagerly out in the streets, at the clubs, at the Opera, in the parks, anywhere and everywhere, for anybody that may bear a resemblance to me, for I have a keen sympathy for M. L. V. Hervé; I can exactly fancy how that little demon of a Coquelicot bewitched and robbed him, poor fellow, as she'd have bewitched and robbed me if she'd had the chance; and if any gentleman reads this who owns a pipe with a grinning faun's head, who fell among thieves at Ems, and played too much écarté with a charming little woman with a nez retroussé and bright marmoset eyes, I shall be very happy to make his acquaintance and condole with him and tell him farther particulars, *vivâ voce*, of How I was Tracked by Trappers, in a case of mistaken identity, and the Evils that came from a Maude and a Meerschaum, innocent things enough, in their way, Heaven knows!

N. B. I learnt one lesson—learn it, too, ami lecteur: When Ulysses is travelling, he'd better keep to his *Times*, his Bradshaw, and his pipe, wrap himself in his plaid, and not let himself be brought out by the fairest Calypso, however dainty her cream-colored gloves, however bewitching her syren voice. But I fancy the advice is perhaps superfluous. Britons are safe enough to be silent on a journey, and put all their porcupine quills out—even to a woman.

Am I Myself?

It was pleasantly remarked by a French gentleman, of long descent but short means, that the antiquity of his house had at last exhausted its possessions.

Such, perhaps, was the position of the young Louis de la Pivardière, Sieur de Bouchet, destined to be the hero of a case which, towards the end of the seventeenth century created an intense interest, and has seldom found its parallel in the records of criminal jurisprudence.

Louis de la Pivardière was the youngest of three sons of a gentleman of noble lineage, but whose possessions at his death were scarcely sufficient to provide his children with the means of an honourable subsistence.

In this position the young and handsome Louis had the good fortune, as he thought it, to captivate the affections of Madame de Chauvelin, widow of the Sieur Menon de Billy, at that time about thirty-five, and the mother of five children by her first marriage. She had a moderate estate at Narbonne, producing a fair but not abundant income. Her beauty, which was but little impaired by time, and her refined and pleasing manners, rendered her a great favourite in the society in which she moved. Her marriage with Pivardière was celebrated at the close of 1687, and for two years all went well, their domestic felicity being only interrupted by passing fits of jealousy on the part of the young husband, which, however, had no other ground than his lady's devotion to general society.

In 1689 the Arrière-ban compelled the Sieur de Pivardiére, as lord of Narbonne, to take his turn of service, and two years later he obtained a lieutenancy in the regiment of dragoons of St. Hermine.

By this time a certain coolness had been engendered between the pair, and the inevitable absence of Louis was endured by both with an amount of resignation hardly consistent with a real affection.

One of the most frequent and (to Madame de la Pivardière) most welcome visitors at the Château de Narbonne, was the reverend prior of the neighbouring Abbey of Miseray—a sequestered edifice nestling in the adjacent wood, and accommodating only some six or eight brethren at most. The prior, as domestic chaplain, attended to celebrate mass on Saturdays at the château.

It was not very long before sharp-eyed and many-tongued scandal began to comment upon the undeniable fact that the reverend gentleman's visits were becoming far more frequent than his spiritual duties seemed to demand. Louis was aware of the existence of such a rumour, but a certain dread of that mixture of censure and ridicule which attaches to a needlessly jealous

husband, induced him to close eye and ear to the growing intimacy, and to merely absent himself more than ever from the scene of his annoyance.

While travelling from place to place on pretence of military duty, but in reality for solace of his mental trouble, Louis found himself one sweet summer evening wandering in the outskirts of Auxerre. Suddenly his attention was attracted by bursts of merriment proceeding from a group of young girls engaged in some youthful game beneath the trees. On one of them especially the young soldier's eyes were fixed with a curiosity and interest he himself could hardly understand. With blue eyes sparkling with mirthful excitement, and bright brown hair waving and glistening in the chequered light, Louis felt his heart irresistibly attracted towards the fairy figure, and without further ceremony set himself to making her closer acquaintance.

He very soon discovered that she was the daughter of a lately deceased innkeeper, named Pillard, a circumstance which gave him secret pleasure as increasing the facilities for, as he hoped, making this fair prize his own.

Without a moment's delay the infatuated young man engaged an apartment in the little inn presided over by the widow Pillard, and entered heart and soul into the enterprise he had resolved upon. We need not pursue him step by step. That he speedily established himself in the good graces of the pretty rustic need not be a matter of surprise. Handsome, graceful, accomplished and in earnest, Louis made short work of her affections. But here his progress was stayed. As pure and good in heart as she was fair in person, his young mistress refused all overtures unsanctified with the marriage rite, and would have dismissed her lover on the spot had he not, following out the impulse he had at first conceived, and determined through all obstacles to obtain his object, acceded to her conditions.

He went through the ceremony accordingly under his family name of Bouchet, dropping that of la Pivardière, and taking every other precaution that suggested itself for the concealment of the mock marriage, as he had previously concealed from his victim the real one. This successfully effected, he took up his residence at the little inn, and, sacrificing pride to love, fulfilled the duties of host with a frank amenity that brought augmented custom to the house, and thus materially added to the comforts of the now happy family.

Within a twelvemonth the young wife, as she believed herself, being shortly to become a mother, it seemed needful to Louis that he should pay a brief visit to his abandoned home, and obtain, if possible, a supply of money.

Accordingly, making what excuse he might, he took horse for Narbonne, and arriving on the second day at the period of the evening meal, found a merry party assembled, and the reverend prior of Miseray dispensing the hospitalities of the château in its master's chair. At this sight, and the cold greeting he received from his wife, Louis' blood began to boil, but conscience whispered in his ear a quieting word. There was no scene; and Louis, taking occasion to mention that

he must rejoin his regiment, if possible, on the morrow, found his lady so obligingly anxious that no financial impediment should arise, that he was enabled to take horse next morning with a lighter heart and heavier purse than he had brought with him.

Four years now elapsed without especial interest, save that Louis's young partner brought him four children, and that he himself paid an annual visit to Narbonne, from whence he derived what supplies he could towards the support of his establishment at Auxerre. But a change was at hand.

Some of those who delight in communicating evil tidings found means to inform Madame de la Pivardière of her husband's pretended marriage, but without indicating name or place. She instantly adopted means for verifying the statement, and had just obtained the required assurance, when her husband set out on his accustomed annual visit to the château.

It would appear that all Louis' old jealousy of the prior of Miseray had revived; for, halting at the village of Bourgdieu, seven leagues from Narbonne, he fell into conversation with a mason whom he knew, and remarked to him that it was his object to arrive late at the château, where he would probably meet with the prior, and would either take his life or lose his own.

No thought of his own infidelity seems to have softened the man's heart as he spurred homeward on his deadly errand. But perhaps he was of opinion with Lemaître that men, claiming for themselves virtues of the mind, exact from the other sex the less noble virtues of the body, maintaining, in fact, that man's honour is in no way allied with his chastity, while with woman honour and chastity are one and the same.

It was at sunset, on the fête of Notre Dame, 1697, that a splendid collation was taking place at Narbonne, at which many of the neighboring gentry, who had attended the morning mass at the château, were present with their families.

To the astonishment of all, the master of the house strode suddenly into the room, and took his seat at the table. All the guests rose and offered their salutations. His wife alone retained her seat, her countenance so expressive of scorn and pent-up anger, that a lady present could not forbear some words of condolence.

"Is it thus," she murmured, "that a husband so long absent should be greeted in his own house?"

Louis overheard it.

"Je ne suis que son mari—je ne suis pas son ami!" ("I am only her husband—not her friend"), he answered bitterly.

The mirth of the feast deported with Louis's appearance. A consciousness of "something wrong" silenced everybody, and at the earliest moment good manners permitted, Louis and his resentful wife found themselves alone.

For a few minutes there reigned a gloomy silence—then, the lady—rising—offered to retire to her apartment. Her husband made a movement to attend her, and, being repulsed, at once demanded to know the reason of her contempt and anger.

"Go back to your new wife," was the indignant reply, "and ask *her* the reason!"

In vain Louis attempted to deny the wrong. She refused to credit—even to listen to—any defence, and heaping on him the bitterest reproaches, ended by declaring that, in a very brief space, he should be made bitterly to repent the injury he had done her. With these ominous words she withdrew, her husband retiring to a separate chamber prepared for him by her orders.

Warned, as it subsequently appeared, by one of the maid servants that his life was not secure so long as he remained under that roof, Louis resolved to depart under cover of the night, and, taking with him his dog and gun, abandoned his horse (which had fallen lame the previous day), his cloak, and pistols—these being likely to encumber him too much in the fatiguing foot journey he proposed to make.

It was in evidence at the trial, that he passed through Bourgdieu, that he lodged on the 17th at Chateauroux, on the 18th at the hostelry de la Cloche at Issodun, and from thence set forward toward Auxerre, where he expected to arrive at dusk.

A few days later there started into life a sinister rumour. Louis de la Pivardiére had, it was affirmed, been assassinated in his own house at Narbonne! How, when or where the report originated, was never known. One thing was certain, that it grew and spread until nothing else was spoken of in the vicinity of the supposed murder, while all went on as usual in the château, and its mistress appeared in public with her accustomed grace and smiles, and a demeanor perfectly unruffled.

But one fine day there appeared at the gate of Narbonne the police-lieutenant of Chatillon, in attendance on the Procureur du Roi, and an inquiry followed.

Fifteen witnesses were examined. Some of whom, resident in the neighbourhood of the château, deposed to having heard a shot fired during the night of the supposed murder.

Madame de la Pivardière was thereupon ordered into custody. But the lady had fled. It was ascertained that she had removed from the château all that was most valuable and easy of transport, and taken refuge herself in the house of her friend, Madame d'Anneuil, pending the issue of the inquiry.

It was no convincing proof of guilt that she should have avoided the storm about to burst on her head. The innocent are often timid: she had reason, moreover, to believe that the lieutenant was no friend to the prior of Miseray, and ignorant as she was of her husband's place of concealment, she was unable to refute at once the calumny.

But the astounding circumstance was, that her two maids, Marguerite Mercier and Catherine Le Moine, being arrested, gave a precise and detailed narrative of the murder of the missing gentleman!

The former, Mercier, her mistress', godchild, and a great favourite, stated that Madame de la Pivardière, having got rid of all who might suspect her, introduced two male servants into her

husband's chamber, by whose hands he was there and then put to death.

The second maid declared that she had been sent out of the way, and only returned when the murder was just accomplished.

The little Mdlle. Pivardière, aged nine, declared that in the middle of the night she had heard her father's voice exclaiming, "Ah, my God! have pity on me!"

A third servant, Jaquette Riflé, denied all knowledge of the assassination.

The first, Mercier, being ill and in danger of death, before receiving the last sacraments, confirmed her former deposition, and added that the prior of Miseray had assisted at the murder, and had dealt the last fatal blow!

There is perhaps nothing more inexplicable in criminal records, than the conduct of these two women, supposing that their testimony was false. They had no grudge against their mistress, who treated them with the kindest indulgence, and, in fact, had everything to lose—nothing to gain—by contributing to her ruin.

It was believed by some that a murder had really been committed, but upon the person of the servant of De la Pivardière, whom his master, under some feeling of distrust, had caused to occupy his bed, he himself escaping in the night, and that next day, on discovering her mistake, Madame de la Pivardière had, with the aid of the prior, buried the body of the murdered valet in the garden. This, it was suggested, accounted for the confidence of her denials, when charged with the murder of her husband. But there was no evidence of any kind to give reality to this hypothesis, and it was at least certain that M. de la Pivardière had brought no servant with him to the château.

The lieutenant now visited Narbonne, and instituted a close inquiry relative to some traces of blood found on the floor of M. de la Pivardière's apartment, but without result.

Meanwhile the lady had petitioned the "Chambre des Vacations" to cause a fresh process to be issued before another judge than he of Chatillon, and that search might be made for her missing but living husband. Her case was accordingly referred to the judge of Remorentin.

She herself pressed the search with the greatest perseverance, and no long time elapsed before he was actually discovered in his humble home at Auxerre. When informed that he was sought for by his wife, the idea that he was to be arrested and tried for bigamy, presented itself at once to his mind. He took to flight. Overtaken at Flavigny, he, for the first time, learned the real state of affairs, and now his apprehensions on his own account were lost in anxiety for his wife.

He returned to Auxerre, and we may imagine the painful scene that ensued when he found himself compelled to avow his true position to the gentle loving woman who had believed herself his wife.

As for the latter, with a nobility of soul hardly to be expected under circumstances so trying, far from giving way to hatred against the man who had wronged her, and jealousy against the woman who was to take him from her, she did her best to comfort her mock-

husband, and incite him to proceed, without the delay of an instant, to the succour of his legitimate wife.

De la Pivardière followed her generous counsel, and without an hour's delay, executed a formal declaration before two notaries, confirming his own existence. He wrote to his wife and to his brother, and this done, started for Narbonne, where he found the château a scene of indescribable confusion, the perquisitions of the police, and the unauthorized intrusion of curious strangers, having reduced it to the condition of a house sacked by a mob.

Shocked at the disturbance of which he had been the unconscious cause, he proceeded forthwith to the judge of Remorentin, and demanded a formal and legal recognition; after which, accompanied by that official, he repaired to Luce, not far from Narbonne, where he was immediately recognised by at least a dozen people, the fact being admitted by the police who had the case in hand.

From Luce they proceeded to Jeumaloches, and, entering the church during divine service on St. Anthony's day, the appearance of the missing man so excited the assembly, that vespers were for some minutes suspended, every one gazing at him with distended eyes and quickened pulse, as though looking upon one really returned from the tomb. Later in the day more than two hundred witnesses, including many persons of high consideration, testified on oath to his identity, and subsequently his little daughter, her nurse, the clergy and gentry of Miseray, and numerous others, recognized the returned man.

One would have thought that such a mass of evidence would have set the question at rest. Far from it. The contest was only now beginning. The law appeared to consider that if the Sieur de la Pivardière was not murdered and buried, he certainly *ought* to have been, and declined to accept the contrary without much more satisfactory proof than that supplied by the reappearance of the murdered individual among his gratulating friends.

The Lieutenant of Chatillon at once bestirred himself, and, proceeding to Narbonne, ordered a strict search to be made in the grounds and lake for the body. While thus engaged, the Sieur de la Pivardière himself joined the busy party, and laughingly accosted the magistrate,—

"Do not trouble yourselves, Messieurs," he said, "to hunt at the bottom of any lake for what you may find on the bank."

The lieutenant directed one scared look at the speaker, then, springing on his horse, departed at full gallop, amidst the cheers and laughter of De la Pivardière's friends.

To his friend, Monsieur Denyan, the advocate, the lieutenant apologized for his flight, on the ground that he really believed that he was looking at the spectre of the missing man.

"But why avoid it?" asked Denyan, coolly. "A magistrate should be proof against such impulses. This—hem—phantom—came only to demand revenge, and to show you where to seek its mangled frame. Such a prodigy might perhaps surprise, but should not startle you. Instead of galloping away, my good sir, you should have

drawn up a procès-verbal on the spot. The discovery of the shade of De la Pivardière beside the lake, was surely the most convincing proof of his decease!"

The Sieur, accompanied by the judge of Remorentin, now visited the prison, and presented himself to the two maid servants who had related his murder. To the surprise of every one, they positively denied his identity, pointing out the difference they professed to discover between their visitor and their master.

It was imagined that the Lieutenant of Chatillon had prompted this denial. He had kept the women up to this time in close confinement, without external communication, and he now protested strongly against the visit of the judge of Remorentin.

The Sieur now visited an Ursuline convent, and was recognised by his two sisters and the Lady Abbess. All his family unhesitatingly acknowledged him, and detained him among them for three weeks, during which period the Remorentin judge prepared a procés-verbal embodying these facts, and this being signed by De la Pivardière, it might be supposed that his difficulties were over. Not so. The tyranny of form prevailed still against reason and reality.

The irrepressible lieutenant resolved to continue his investigation of this murder of a living man. He managed to obtain from the Attorney-General an order of Court, staying the proceedings of the judge of Remorentin, and ordering a new and superior inquiry. The prior of Miseray was arrested, and placed—contrary to custom, in irons, pending the process. The Sieur de la Pivardière took part in the latter, as representing his wife, and in the first place demanded a safe-conduct for four months (protecting himself thus against process for the bigamy), and that the letters, &c., he had written since the date of his alleged assassination, might be compared with those preceding that date.

The pleadings were sufficiently curious, but would weary the patience of any reader, unless one were found who could take a professional interest in the intricacies of old French law.

De la Pivardière's counsel of course dwelt strongly upon the overwhelming evidence that established their client's identity; while, as regards the depositions of the two maids, their contradictions and retractations were pointed out with great perspicuity, and at inordinate length, seeing that the closing argument simply asserted that their testimony to the murder *must* be worthless, the victim having returned.

This rather reminds one of the French prefêt, who, being censured for not receiving a royal visitor with the customary salute, adduced a whole catalogue of reasons, ending with the not immaterial one, that there were neither cannon nor powder in the town!

The counsel concluded by attributing the trouble and calumny heaped upon Madame de la Pivardière to two great causes, an injurious cabal, and the mystery which her husband had, to hide his own misdoing, flung around his recent life.

After a plea of equal length from the opposite side, still adhering to the non-identity of De la Pivardière, the

Court (July 23, 1698) issued a most verbose and elaborate decree, the substance whereof was to the effect that, further proceedings being judged necessary, the prisoners should be conveyed to Chartres, and M. de la Pivardière be placed in immediate arrest, with the view of setting the question of identity at rest for ever.

This decree, which puts the innocent, as it were, in the place of guilt, was not in effect prejudicial to his interests, since a judgment in his favour, without such previous inquiry, would have been void.

The presence of De la Pivardière was imperative, and since (having failed of his safe-conduct) he refused to appear, compulsion was necessary. Besides, his very absence favoured the imputation of imposture.

On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that at this time bigamy was a capital offence, and though the records of love can boast of many an example of men sacrificing their lives for their mistresses, those of marriage are almost barren of such instances.

In this difficulty help came from an unexpected quarter. De la Pivardière's noble second wife hastened to Versailles, and, aided by some persons about the king, petitioned the latter for the required protection for the husband who was about to abandon her.

Louis Quatorze was not the monarch to be wholly insensible to beauty in grief! He raised the fair suppliant from her knees, with the gallant remark:

"Une fille, faite comme vous, meritait un meilleur sort."

And, having inquired into the particulars, granted an immediate safe-conduct for three months—in terms so ample that—as some observed at the time—the Sieur de la Pivardière might, if so disposed, have gone through the whole gamut of crime, short of treason, without any one daring to interpose, until the period for which it was granted had expired. As things were, the protection was several times renewed.

Thus provided, the Sieur gave himself up, a voluntary prisoner, at Fort l'Evêque, Paris, September 1st, 1698.

The matter became at this time more than ever complicated by the death of the Lieutenant of Chatillon, whose heirs, from motives of respect to his memory, felt it their duty to continue the process he had originated.

Upon the second trial a large and distinguished bar appeared on either side, and gigantic efforts were made to increase the mystery—efforts so successful that it was not until the 14th June, 1701, that this extraordinary case came to an end.

The final judgment, after duly reciting the foregoing proceedings, decreed in favour of De la Pivardière, acquitting all those placed in arrest during the process, and condemning Marguerite Mercier (her fellow-servant, Le Moine, had died during the process) to make the public "amende honorable" in the usual form as a false witness, denying "in a loud and intelligible voice" her slanderous assertions, after which she was to be publicly whipped and branded with a fleur-de-lys on the right shoulder, thereafter to be banished, her goods being forfeited to the crown.

Whatever may have been the private wrong and suffering inflicted in this strange case, it was not without benefit to the commonwealth, many questions theretofore of great legal uncertainty having been definitively set at rest. A list of fifteen of such decisions were issued to the judges of the various courts, and became thenceforth indisputable law.

The Sieur De la Pivardière and his wife did not very long survive this event in their lives.

The Sieur, still cherishing his old jealousy, having only consulted his own honour and the safety of his wife in the recent proceeding, refused to return to his home. He, however, revisited the noble-hearted woman who had come to his rescue, only to bid her farewell. It would be difficult to realize the mingled love and grief of such a parting.

De la Pivardière subsequently obtained through his relation, the Duc de la Feuillade, a semi-military employ, in which he was killed while leading his brigade against a large band of "contrebandiers."

Nearly at the same time his lady was found dead in her bed from natural causes, at the château.

The prior of Miseray, who had long since ceased to visit at the latter place, died in high esteem, at a very advanced age.

It is pleasant to be able to state that the generous second wife was destined to see many days of peace and prosperity. She was twice married, lived for many years after the events above recorded, and enjoyed the well-deserved esteem of all who knew her, and were acquainted with the strange history in which she alone appears to advantage.

Dorido and Clorinia

I MUST not here omit to give you an account of a singular and appalling event, which took place at Rome, on the eve of my departure from that city, although in no way connected with my own adventures. The ambassador had just finished supper, when a Neapolitan gentleman, who often came to that hotel, entered our room. He had all the appearance of a man who had met with some unpleasant experience, and addressing his excellency—"I am come, my Lord, to acquaint you with a very extraordinary incident, which I have only just heard, and which, as you may see, has affected me not a little." "I am anxious to hear what it can be," replied my master; "hand the gentleman a chair, Guzman:" and the Neapolitan, being seated, began the narrative that follows:—

A gentleman a native of this city, —as high-born and accomplished as he is brave and handsome, and of whom, I dare say, you have heard,—named Dorido, fell in love with a lady, the fair

Clorinia, not more than sixteen or seventeen—beautiful, virtuous, and also of a good family. She received an excellent education, and her charms, both of person and of mind, shone with redoubled lustre, by the extreme care and polish bestowed upon her manners and her attainments of every kind. Her surpassing beauty, which none could gaze on with impunity, made her parents cautious how they permitted her to appear in public, lest some quarrel might arise among those eager to win her regard; for which reason either her father or brother was seldom seen absent from her side.

Already, for some months, had young Dorido seen and loved her; and such was the passion he entertained for her, as wholly to absorb his mind, and lead him, by seeking every occasion for looks and signs—all by which he was permitted to address her—to convince her of its reality. These soft and voiceless witnesses of his love were not always fortunate enough to be regarded; but when they were, they seemed to produce a favourable effect upon the object of them. Clorinia took pleasure in secretly observing him—far more than she let it appear that she did; but soon, without knowing exactly why, she felt equally interested in attracting his regard, till, by degrees returning his slight advances, she caught the sweet contagion she had before communicated to him, and, for the first time, felt the young emotions of love and jealousy, as he had done.

It was impossible Dorido could be long ignorant of the conquest he had meditated, and for a period he gave himself up to the delightful assurance of being loved. But soon sighing for more substantial proofs of his success, he sought for the means; he contracted an acquaintance with her brother, Valerio, and so far won his confidence as seldom to be seen out of his company. They continually visited each other, and Dorido had now ample opportunity to contemplate the charms he so much admired, and even to speak to and to hear her speak. Still he could not declare his feelings; and their eyes were their sole interpreters of their secret wishes.

Things, however, did not long remain in this position. Clorinia could not conceal her love from her favourite maid, a girl of some experience, and one who wished to show her devotion to her young mistress. With this view she went of her own accord to find the lover, and said to him: "Señor Dorido, you are very handsome, and it would be foolish in me to conceal what it would be still more foolish in you to conceal from me. I see into your heart; you are in love with Clorinia, and you are not the only one that loves. You are both dying to be left alone together, and I truly pity your case. I shall have no rest till I invent some expedient to give you this happiness." The lover, enraptured to hear these words, thanked the kind creature from the bottom of his heart, declaring, that if she succeeded in what she promised, she would find him any thing but ungrateful for the boon. He then sat down, wrote an impassioned letter, full of love and gratitude, which he conjured her to deliver safe into the hands of her fair mistress.

Scintilla returned home, and holding the billet in her hand, told her lady the object of her embassy; for which, though she received a sharp chiding, she was soon with no great difficulty pardoned. How and where the lovers were to meet became the next question. The young lady, declaring it to be impossible, wished to give up the idea; but her ingenious maid hit upon a method which she could not but agree was extremely deserving of a trial. Scintilla was in the habit of occupying a little low apartment, adjoining another set apart chiefly for the lumber of the house, and which received light only through a small grated window, through which a person was barely able to insert his hand. It opened upon a very lonely unfrequented quarter, which seemed to have been made expressly for the rendezvous of two lovers on some quiet night.

When the duenna found her young lady inclined to put her new theory into practice by means of this little grated window, she went and acquainted the gentle lover, who, that very same evening, about eleven o'clock, found himself close to the place. He saw the window, he saw the good duenna, and she preached patience to him—at least till the rest of the domestics should have retired. Yet he did not sigh there long; the delightful moment was at hand; Clorinia appeared in all her beauty, though trembling in every accent and in every nerve. Her lover, too, could not utter a word. They came to tell of their love, and the excess of their joy prevented it; but love has more than one language; the lady's hand was extended through the envious bars, was grasped, and instantly covered with a thousand kisses.

By degrees they recovered the power of speech; they gave full vent to the emotions by which they were governed—the delight of hearing each other speak, and being together. The morning would thus have found, without interrupting them, had not the watchful guardian of their love informed them of the lapse of time. Before bidding adieu, Dorido conjured his mistress to permit him to return on the ensuing evening, at the same hour, to the same spot; and this she had not either the courage or inclination to refuse him.

Both were equally enraptured with their meeting, and sighed with equal ardor to repeat it. Dorido was in a state of impatience and agitation which would not permit him a moment's repose; and he counted each minute until the promised one arrived that was to restore his Clorinia to his sight. The lady was equally true to it, and this night, with less timidity and alarm, their mutual joy seemed to be more intense. A lively conversation ensued; in which each, eager to display the superior charm of a well adorned and accomplished mind, as well as of person, exerted themselves to the utmost, and not a few were the sprightly and happy allusions, and more delicate compliments they made and returned each other. The interview continued more than three hours, and you may suppose was not unmingled with vows and innocent caresses. Such was the charm of this meeting, as to render it again imperative on the prudent attendant to

remind them of the hour; and it was some time before she succeeded in rousing them to a sense of their danger, and tearing them from each other's sight.

The only other person acquainted with Dorido's passion was a Roman gentleman, named Horazio, who, unknown to his friend, was extremely attached to the same lady. Perceiving, however, that he made no progress in her affections, he conjectured that there was somewhere a rival, perhaps more fortunate than himself; and it was not long before his suspicions were directed towards Dorido, from the circumstance of his being seen so frequently in the company of the brother. To ascertain at once how far he was correct in his supposition, Horazio went directly to Dorido, with whom he was in daily habit of intercourse, and addressed him in these terms:— "I am come, my dear friend, to ask you a particular favour, such as I trust you will not refuse; for my peace of mind depends upon it. I see you continually with Valerio,—you are very often at his house,—and I suspect that you are smitten with the beauty of his lovely sister. Let me appeal to your candour and kindness,—if it be as I think, reveal the fact, for you are too worthy and noble for me to dispute with you the affections of this enchanting and accomplished girl."

"You are then yourself in love with Clorinia?" enquired Dorido, with an anxious air.

"I am most certainly charmed with her," replied Horazio; "but I am just sensible enough to allow that you better deserve to obtain her regard."

"In that I should feel myself especially honoured," said Dorido; "but, all flattery apart, I will tell you candidly that it is not my intention to solicit the hand of the fair Clorinia."

"Is that possible!" exclaimed Horazio, quickly; "is it not your object to become the husband of Valerio's sister? Ah, my friend, how different do we feel then,—how I long to unite my fate for ever with hers! And, indeed, if such are your ideas, I think you ought to resign any other views or intentions you may have formed, in favour of my more lasting—more honourable claims. As my friend, you will do as much, I know." "And as the friend of your Clorinia's family, you might have added," rejoined Dorido, "in that point of view I assuredly ought. Yes, I will leave the field open to you; and if Valerio's sister consent to bestow her hand upon you, I, for one, will not oppose your success. Nay, I will do more, I will speak to her in your favour; and, as far as it may depend on me, my embassy shall not be a bootless one."

So delighted was Horazio with this frank and generous conduct on the part of his friend, that he was at a loss for words to express his gratitude; not reflecting that the promise given was conditional, and made to depend upon the lady's own choice. In short, such was the illusion of his joy, that he repeatedly pressed his friend to urge his cause as if it were his own; and with so much earnestness, and tenderness of manner, as really to interest the feeling and pique the generosity of his more favoured rival. He felt the power of virtuous love; and, doing justice

to the purer motives of his friend, Dorido resolved to sacrifice his more licentious passion, to accomplish the lasting happiness not only of Horazio, but of the lady's family and of herself.

In pursuance of this object, on their next interview, Dorido thus addressed the lady to whom he had before made so many professions of unalterable love:—"You are doubtless not ignorant, Madam, that you rank in your long list of conquests, a gentleman named Horazio; but I am very doubtful if you are aware to what an extreme degree he is captivated with you. He actually idolises you, and the bare idea of ever becoming your husband is the sole and sweetest dream of his existence; without which he declares that life for him has no charm."

"I am delighted at what you tell me," replied Clorinia, "for now I shall have an opportunity of shewing you what little regard I pay to the adoration of all the lovers in the world—except—except one."

"I feel," replied Dorido, "all the value of such an acknowledgment, every way so noble; but at the same time, I should be undeserving of this exceeding goodness, were I not in a manner to take up my arms against myself, in defence of one of the best, and most amiable and generous of friends. Horazio's merit is great, and when you come to appreciate it rightly, you would probably not much regret it if your parents were desirous of bestowing you upon so excellent a man!"

"How then," exclaimed the beauty, with a look of extreme surprise, and even terror, "do you wish to yield—to destroy me? Can you be in earnest that you wish me to return Horazio's passion?"

"No, truly," replied Dorido, "that is not my idea; I only wished you to understand, that if you bore him any affection, and your parents had resolved to give him your hand, it would have been bootless in me to complain; I would then make a sacrifice to the happiness of my rival, in order to show how truly devoted I am to all your wishes;—do you comprehend me?"

"Do I?" replied the lady bitterly; "I know that I would not fall a victim so submissively as you appear to think; or, or your attachment has lost much of the fidelity—the ardour which I believed it to possess. But," she continued, "I wish not to put you to this proof. Dorido has been the first, and will be the last of the lovers I wish to have;—on that at least you may depend. Let Horazio persist or not, as he feels disposed in his pursuit of me—he will not gain any more in my esteem; and I wish you to understand that as my fixed determination. I was before aware of his views; and I have ever since conceived an aversion for him, amounting to absolute horror; and for which I can hardly account."

Dorido no longer ventured to say a word in his friend's favour; he saw that it was worse than useless to press the subject upon her attention. He changed the conversation, which took an interest of another kind, exhausting itself in the most tender and passionate exclamations on the side of Clorinia, which renewed all Dorido's ardour, and no fewer protestations on his. On the ensuing morning, Horazio

called upon his friend: "You have seen Clorinia?" he exclaimed, "and spoken in my favour; and how did she receive it?" was the breathless inquiry he made.

"In very ill part, indeed," replied the other, "and you must not continue to flatter yourself with the least hope. I said all I could to raise your merit in her eyes; your person, wealth, family—but all in vain. I described to her the excess of your attachment, greater, most likely, than it is; but the cruel creature stopped my mouth, vowing, that though you loved till the day of doom, you should never be united in marriage bands with her."

On hearing these words, Horazio grew deadly pale, and seemed lost in profound thought; while, struck with the extreme pain he appeared to suffer, Dorido, softening his tone, beseeched him to summon more resolution, and desist from a vain and fruitless pursuit; adding, that in Rome there were many as lovely girls as Clorinia, who would not require to be compelled to return his love. "Besides, my dear Horazio," he continued, "I am sure you have not the slightest cause to complain of me; I would have yielded her to you, I swear, had I seen the least probability of her indulging in an inclination for you. I would have made this noble sacrifice to our friendship; and will you, on your part, refuse to relinquish an anxious, painful undertaking, and which, in the remote case of succeeding, must be at the expense of your best friend."

It was now for the first time Horazio broke silence, and fixing his eyes on his friend,—"I am very far," he said, "from reproaching you. You have rendered me a sad and useless service; you have spoken for me, and I thank you for it. It is only just, I agree, that I should renounce the pursuit of what I cannot obtain: her heart is yours,—and so let it be. Farewell! and I will try to attend to your advice about attaching myself to some other more attainable object."

With these words he left his friend Dorido in the persuasion, that, struck with the justice of what he had said, he would leave nothing untried to banish the thought of Clorinia from his mind. It was not so; he had set down his friend Dorido as a traitor, a false, malicious, selfish hypocrite, who had betrayed him; drawn a hateful portrait of him before the lady he adored; and he now resolved to take the matter into his own hands. "By heavens!" he exclaimed, "I will ask her; I will have her in marriage from her father; he will plead for me better than a rival." He proceeded forthwith to act upon this suggestion; he declared his wishes, and they were accepted and approved. He also obtained his own father's consent, and the two old gentlemen soon sat in council upon the business, the result of which was, that the marriage should take place, provided the inclination of the lady could be brought to accord with their own views.

On the first mention, however, of the affair, such was the extreme repugnance and even horror manifested by the beautiful Clorinia, that the design was as quickly abandoned as it had been formed, as a thing wholly impossible.

How lamentable the folly and

weakness of man! to let a single passion obtain mastery over his mind, until he becomes no longer the same being; and, yielding up the helm of reason, is borne, like a lost vessel, upon the rocks. Horazio imagined he saw his passion treated with scorn,—his rival happy and triumphant; and in an instant, the love which before animated his soul became changed into bitter hatred. He now regarded Clorinia as an object of horror, and brooded over thoughts of revenge. He next began to study the means, and how he could strike most surely and deeply at the hearts of both,—and at a single blow. He set a vigilant guard upon their proceedings, a wretch hired to dog their steps whithersoever they went; and having thus discovered the place of their stolen interviews, with every circumstance attending them, there remained little else requisite to supply him with the most strange, cruel, and heartless method of revenge that ever entered into the human breast. Actuated by his infernal hatred, he one night, anticipating the arrival of Dorido, hastened to the place where they met, and approached the little window, at which he already beheld looking forth, the object in pursuit of which he had come. In the obscurity of the evening he knew that the sister of Valerio would easily mistake him for her lover; and, in fact, she addressed him in the most affectionate language—in words that made Horazio's blood boil within him and impelled him to deep revenge.

In perfect silence the treacherous friend approached: he stretched out his hand, he clasped that of the lady eagerly meeting his, and holding it with a ferocious and gigantic grasp, he had the heart, with a sharp instrument prepared for the purpose, to separate the lovely limb from its arm. The act was momentary; vain were her shrieks; the villian had fled. He already sat in the gloom of his secret chamber, and in the deeper gloom of his soul madly exulting in the thought of his triumphant revenge.

But what were the horror-struck feelings of the family and friends of that fair girl, when, roused by her cries, they found her deprived of consciousness, and bathed in her blood. Her faithful attendant hung over her, still filling the house with her shrieks. On beholding the deed, her parents both fell unconscious at her side; while the unhappy brother and the servants were busily endeavouring to staunch the bleeding wound. It was no time to doubt, to inquire, or to accuse; the most eminent surgeons were summoned to the spot, to attempt, if possible, to arrest the unhappy lady's fleeting breath. The aged father, being meanwhile recovered, besought his domestics, for the ends of justice, to reveal nothing without orders; while he sighed over the lost honour and happiness of his house. Her brother, Valerio, having armed himself, now issued into the street, attended by his valets; and what was his grief, at being enabled for some distance to track the murderous villain by the drops of his dear sister's blood; for the wretch had borne along with him the bleeding hand as a trophy of his secret crime. While thus employed, he met his friend Dorido, who was hastening to

his accustomed interview with an air of visible joy. In faltering accents Valerio called to him, "Alas! my dear friend, whither are you going? Help us, for God's sake help to find the murderer; for I see by your looks you know nothing of the horrid deed. Our poor Clorinia—my sister"—but words failed him, and he could not go on. "Gracious God!" cried Dorido, "what has happened—quick—answer me—what of Clorinia?"

"That," replied Valerio, in a voice of solemn anquish, "that we ought to conceal from every human ear and eye, but to you it shall be told, because I know as my friend that you will unite with me in hunting down whithersoever he flee the cruel assassin of my poor sister."

Pierced to the heart by these words, Dorido nearly sunk under sudden terror and surprise. Then, trembling and faint, he begged Valerio to explain every thing; which he did; and Valerio would then have conducted him to the surgeon, had he not resolutely resisted, exclaiming, "It is no time now for aught but revenge. She will be lost to me! but I will drag forth the unheard-of villain to light—monster as he is! Leave me deal with him, for I feel this visitation as bitterly as you can. It is impossible to think of it without shuddering: but, heavens! with what delight shall I inflict upon him a punishment, as near as may be commensurate with his fatal crime."

The two friends then separated, Dorido returning to his own house, in the resolution of taking some immediate step to avenge his outraged love, and full of indignation against Horazio, whom he more than suspected to have committed the atrocious deed. He first shut himself up in his room, where he gave free vent to his feelings on so severe a loss; for he had now become more deeply attached to the fair Clorinia than before. "My lost, my beauteous one!" he exclaimed, "my envious, hated rival hath indeed succeeded! hath snatched thee from my arms for ever! Alas! you mistook him for your Dorido; and I—I am the sad cause of the calamity that has befallen you. But for me, you had been happy and beautiful as ever!—in all thy sweet innocence and tranquillity of soul. Yes, it is I who have been thy assassin! Yet will I not long survive thee,—when once I shall have immolated thy wretched destroyer to thy dear and sacred shade! Would only that thou mightest survive, to enjoy the only consolation left us now—to hear of the memorable doom to be inflicted by this right hand upon the body of the traitor!"

The next morning found him still absorbed in grief and tears; but then, rousing himself, he hastened to the house of Clorinia's father, where sorrow and consternation sat on every countenance. The father and the brother seemed to feel fresh grief on his appearance. The old man, as he welcomed him, observed, "Alas! Dorido my friend, my sweet girl is even now in the agonies of death. She has lost so much blood, that alone it is enough to forbid every hope. Was there ever a more unfortunate father! What can have been the motive, think you, for the commission of so accursed a deed. It was no man—it was a horrid monster,—

and what punishment can be imagined adequate to reach it?"

"Sir," replied Dorido, "try to assuage your grief; and feel quite at rest on that head,—to avenge her is the object of us all. I have undertaken to chastise him;—he will perish. But ere that, give me a legal title to become her avenger; I love Clorinia as my own soul; unite our hands ere she breathe her last sigh. Thus, too, will her reputation not suffer; and you will not owe to a stranger that satisfaction to which you are entitled."

Without hesitation, the father as well as the son accepted the proposal; they extolled his honourable feeling, and expressed gratitude for the noble manner in which he had stepped forward to obviate all unpleasant remarks that might affect the poor girl's reputation. The old man, weeping, took his way to his daughter's bedside; and a delightful smile played over her countenance when she heard what was requested. She signified her assent amidst tears of mingled bitterness and joy. She declared that she should die contented as the wife of Dorido; she inquired eagerly if he were at the house, and if she might be permitted to see and speak to him. This, as the fever appeared to have left her, it was conceived might not prove injurious to her; he approached; but so great was the sudden joy she experienced on beholding him, that she fell into a swoon, from which it was some time before she recovered. The surgeon upon this, gave strict injunctions that the lovers should not be permitted to speak to each other; but their looks sufficiently told what they felt and suffered. Observing that his presence appeared to afford her relief, he did not leave her during the remainder of the day. In the evening, a priest and a notary were called in, and the marriage ceremony was performed before the assembled and weeping family.

For the two ensuing days, feeble hopes were entertained of her life. She seemed to rally, and even the surgeon no longer despaired; but all were disappointed. On the third day, a fresh access of fever, of a more rapid and violent character, seized on the patient, and left not the remotest chance. As her last hour drew nigh, Dorido, perceiving that the event must occur, secretly withdrew, and set about the means of his premeditated revenge. He sought Horazio in every spot; and at length meeting with him, he took him cordially by the hand, and as if quite unsuspicious of any crime attaching to him, he carelessly asked if he would come and sup with him that evening, to which Horazio consented, conceiving that as he had heard no public notice made of the atrocious deed, the lady was either recovering, or his friend unacquainted with her misfortune. At the appointed hour, Horazio went, as he had been accustomed, to join his friend —and both were soon seated opposite each other at the table. Dorido had however taken care that the wine should be well drugged; and such was its potent effect, that in a very little time Horazio found himself overpowered, and fell into a deep slumber.

It was now that Dorido, assisted by his two valets, wholly devoted to his interest, bound the sleeper both hand and foot; they next slipped a cord round his neck, and with this and another

passed round his body they fastened him up to a pillar which stood in the apartment. Having before closed all the doors in the house, they now proceeded to administer antidotes to his lethargy, which speedily recalled the unhappy wretch to a sense of his situation.

The moment he found himself awake did the dreadful truth flash conviction and horror to the soul of the assassin,—he knew in a moment wherefore he was there, and what he had to expect. He did more—he confessed his heinous crime, while he implored compassion and mercy in accents of bitter sincerity, such as only the love of life even in a convict can inspire. But here they were all in vain; steeled to the heart's core, the lover and the husband,—bereaved so barbarously of his charming mistress,—listened to his prayers and cries with mockery; his imagination being still haunted with the picture of his dying wife. Bent upon inflicting retributive justice, he proceeded to sever with an axe the hands of the wretched Horazio; and while still in all the agonies of approaching dissolution, he commanded his valets to strangle him with the rope that bound him to the fatal pillar. Then having hung the two dissevered members round the neck of the corpse, he directed them to bear it to the exact spot where the fatal deed had been committed, and on the same fearful night, unable to support the idea of life in a place connected with so many horrors, he took his departure from Rome. Pursuit was vain,—it is not even known what route he took, to what country he has flown; but I have been assured that the unfortunate Clorinia breathed her last about three hours after he disappeared.

Here the Neapolitan gentleman paused;—no one spoke. A story altogether of so tragic a nature seemed to have made a deep impression upon the ambassador, no less than upon all present who had listened to it, and who most unfeignedly deplored the fate of the unhappy lady. They also blamed Dorido in no measured terms; while the whole agreed on reflecting farther on the subject, that in the conduct of both these Spanish cavaliers there appeared a spirit of revenge, and a reckless daring,—a savage love of blood, in no way compatible with the character of the true knight, or of the true Christian.

Pen, Pencil and Poison

It has constantly been made a subject of reproach against artists and men of letters that they are lacking in wholeness and completeness of nature. As a rule, this must necessarily be so. That very concentration of vision and intensity of purpose which is the characteristic of the artistic temperament is in

itself a mode of limitation. To those who are preoccupied with the beauty of form, nothing else seems of much importance. Yet there are many exceptions to this rule. Rubens served as ambassador, and Goethe as state councillor, and Milton as Latin secretary to Cromwell. Sophocles held civic office in his own city; the humourists, essayists, and novelists of modern America seem to desire nothing better than to become the diplomatic representatives of their country; and Charles Lamb's friend, Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, the subject of this brief memoir, though of an extremely artistic temperament, followed many masters other than art, being not merely a poet and a painter, an art critic, an antiquarian and a writer of prose, an amateur of beautiful things, and a dilettante of things delightful, but also a forger of no mean or ordinary capabilities, and as a subtle and secret poisoner almost without rival in this or any age.

This remarkable man, so powerful with "pen, pencil, and poison," as a great poet of our own day has finely said of him, was born at Chiswick, in 1794. His father was the son of a distinguished solicitor of Gray's Inn and Hatton Garden. His mother was the daughter of the celebrated Dr. Griffiths, the editor and founder of the *Monthly Review,* the partner in another literary speculation of Thomas Davies, that famous bookseller of whom Johnson said that he was not a bookseller, but "a gentleman who dealt in books," the friend of Goldsmith and Wedgwood, and one of the most well-known men of of his day. Mrs. Wainewright died, in giving him birth, at the early age of twenty-one, and an obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* tells us of her "amiable disposition and numerous accomplishments," and adds, somewhat quaintly, that "she is supposed to have understood the writings of Mr. Locke as well as perhaps any person of either sex now living." His father did not long survive his young wife, and the little child seems to have been brought up by his grandfather, and, on the death of the latter, in 1803, by his uncle, George Edward Griffiths, whom he subsequently poisoned. His boyhood was passed at Linden House, Turnham Green, one of those many fine Georgian mansions that have, unfortunately, disappeared before the inroads of the suburban builder, and to its lovely gardens and well timbered park he owed that simple and impassioned love of nature which never left him all through his life, and which made him so peculiarly susceptible to the spiritual influences of Wordsworth's poetry. He went to school at Charles Burney's academy at Hammersmith. Mr. Burney was the son of the historian of music, and the near kinsman of the artistic lad who was destined to turn out his most remarkable pupil. He seems to have been a man of a good deal of culture, and in after years Mr. Wainewright often spoke of him with much affection as a philosopher, an archæologist, and an admirable teacher, who while he valued the intellectual side of education, did not forget the importance of early moral training. It was under Mr. Burney that he first developed his talent as an artist, and Mr. Hazlitt tells us that a drawing-book which he used at school is still extant, and displays great talent and natural feeling. Indeed, painting was the first art that fascinated him. It was

not till much later that he sought to find expression by pen and poison.

Before this, however, he seems to have been carried away by boyish dreams of the romance and chivalry of a soldier's life, and to have become a young guardsman. But the reckless, dissipated life of his companions failed to satisfy the refined, artistic temperament of one who was made for other things. In a short time he wearied of the service. "Art," he tells us, in words that still move by their ardent sincerity and strange fervour, "Art touched her renegade; by her pure and high influences the noisome mists were purged; my feelings parched hot, and tarnished, were renovated with cool, fresh bloom, simple, beautiful to the simple-hearted." But Art was not the only cause of the change. "The Writings of Wordsworth," he goes on to say, "did much towards calming the confusing whirl necessarily incident to sudden mutations. I wept over them tears of happiness and gratitude." He accordingly left the army, with its rough barrack life and coarse mess-room tittle-tattle, and returned to Linden House, full of this new-born enthusiasm for culture. A severe illness, in which, to use his own words, he was "broken like a vessel of clay," prostrated him for a time. His delicately strung organisation, however indifferent it might have been to inflicting pain on others, was itself most keenly sensitive to pain. He shrank from suffering as a thing that mars and maims human life, and seems to have wandered through that terrible valley of melancholia from which so many great, perhaps greater, spirits have never emerged. But he was young—only twenty-five years of age—and he soon passed out of the "dead black waters," as he called them, into the larger air of humanistic culture. As he was recovering from the illness that had led him almost to the gates of death, he conceived the idea of taking up literature as an art. "I said with John Woodvill," he cries, 'it were a life of gods to dwell in such an element,' to see, and hear, and write brave things:—

"These high and gusty relishes of life
Have no allayings of mortality."

It is impossible not to feel that in this passage we have the utterance of a man who had a true passion for letters. "To see, and hear, and write brave things," this was his aim.

Scott, the editor of the *London Magazine*, struck by the young man's genius, or under the influences of the strange fascination that he exercised on every one who knew him, invited him to write a series of articles on artistic subjects, and under a series of fanciful pseudonyms he began to contribute to the literature of the day. *Janus Weathercock*, *Egomet Bonmot*, and *Van Vinkvooms*, were some of the grotesque masks under which he chose to hide his seriousness, or to reveal his levity. A mask tells us more than a face. These disguises intensified his personality. In an incredibly short time he seems to have made his mark. Charles Lamb speaks of "kind, light-hearted Wainewright,'" whose prose is "capital." We hear of him entertaining Macready, John Forster, Maginn, Talfourd, Sir Wentworth Dilke, the poet John Clare, and others, at a *petit-diner*. Like Disraeli, he determined to startle the town as a dandy, and his beautiful rings, his antique cameou breastpin, and his pale lemon-

coloured kid gloves, were well known, and indeed were regarded by Hazlitt as being the signs of a new manner in literature: while his rich, curly hair, fine eyes, and exquisite white hands, gave him the dangerous and delighted distinction of being different from others. There was something in him of Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré. At times he reminds us of Julien Sorel. De Quincey saw him once. It was at a dinner at Charles Lamb's. "Amongst the company, all literary men, sat a murderer," he tells us, and he goes on to describe how on that day he had been ill, and had hated the face of man and woman, and yet found himself looking with intellectual interest across the table at the young writer beneath whose affectations of manner there seemed to him to lie so much unaffected sensibility, and speculates on "what sudden growth of another interest" would have changed his mood, had he known of what terrible sin the guest to whom Lamb paid so much attention was even then guilty.

His life-work falls naturally under the three heads suggested by Mr. Swinburne, and it may be partly admitted that, if we set aside his achievements in the sphere of poison, what he has actually left to us hardly justifies his reputation.

But then it is only the Philistine who seeks to estimate a personality by the vulgar test of production. This young dandy sought to be somebody, rather than to do something. He recognised that Life itself is an art, and has its modes of style no less than the arts that seek to express it. Nor is his work without interest. We hear of William Blake stopping in the Royal Academy before one of his pictures and pronouncing it to be "very fine." His essays are prefiguring of much that has since been realised. He seems to have anticipated some of those accidents of modern culture that are regarded by many as true essentials. He writes about La Gioconda, and early French poets, and the Italian Renaissance. He loves Greek gems, and Persian carpets, and Elizabethan translations of *Cupid and Psyche,* and the *Hypnerotomachia,* and book-bindings, and early editions, and wide-margined proofs. He is keenly sensitive to the value of beautiful surroundings, and never wearies of describing to us the rooms in which he lived, or he would have liked to live. He had that curious love of green which, in individuals, is always the sign of a subtle artistic temperament, and in nations is said to denote a laxity, if not a decadence of morals. Like Baudelaire, he was extremely fond of cats, and with Gautier, he was fascinated by that "sweet marble monster" of both sexes that we can still see at Florence and in the Louvre.

There is, of course, much in his descriptions, and his suggestions for decoration, that shows that he did not entirely free himself from the false taste of his time. But it is clear that he was one of the first to recognise what is, indeed, the very keynote of æsthetic eclecticism, I mean the true harmony of all really beautiful things, irrespective of age or place, of school or manner. He saw that in decorating a room, which is to be, not a room for show, but a room to live in, we should never aim at any archæological reconstruction of the past, nor burden ourselves with any fanciful necessity for historical accuracy. In this artistic perception he was

perfectly right. All beautiful things belong to the same age.

And so, in his own library, as he describes it, we find the delicate fictile vase of the Greek, with its exquisitely painted figures and the faint ΚΑΛΟΣ finely traced upon its side, and behind it hangs an engraving of the "Delphic Sibyl" of Michael Angelo, or of the "Pastoral" of Giorgione. Here is a bit of Florentine majolica, and here a rude lamp from some old Roman tomb. On the table lies a book of Hours, "cased in a cover of solid silver gilt, wrought with quaint devices and studded with small brilliants and rubies," and close by it "squats a little ugly monster, a Lar, perhaps, dug up in the sunny fields of corn-bearing Sicily." Some dark antique bronzes contrast "with the pale gleam of two noble *Christi Crucifixi*, one carved in ivory, the other moulded in wax." He has his trays of Tassie's gems, his tiny Louis-Quatorze *bonbonnière* with a miniature by Petitot, his highly prized "brown-biscuit teapots, filagree-worked," his citron morocco letter-case, and his "pomona-green" chair.

One can fancy him lying there in the midst of his books and casts and engravings, a true virtuoso, a subtle connoisseur, turning over his fine collection of Marc Antonios, and his Turner's "Liber Studiorum," of which he was a warm admirer, or examining with a magnifier some of his antique gems and cameos, "the head of Alexander on an onyx of two strata," or "that superb *altissimo relievo* on cornelian, Jupiter Ægiochus." He was always a great amateur of engravings, and gives some very useful suggestions as to the best means of forming a collection. Indeed, while fully appreciating modern art, he never lost sight of the importance of reproductions of the great masterpieces of the past, and all that he says about the value of plaster casts is quite admirable.

As an art critic he concerned himself primarily with the complex impressions produced by a work of art, and certainly the first step in æsthetic criticism is to realise one's own impressions. He cared nothing for abstract discussions on the nature of the Beautiful, and the historical method, which has since yielded such rich fruit, did not belong to his day, but he never lost sight of the great truth that Art's first appeal is neither to the intellect nor to the emotions, but purely to the artistic temperament, and he more than once points out that this temperament, this "taste," as he calls it, being unconsciously guided and made perfect by frequent contact with the best work, becomes in the end a form of right judgment. Of course, there are fashions in art just as there are fashions in dress, and perhaps none of us can ever quite free ourselves from the influence of custom and the influence of novelty. He certainly could not, and he frankly acknowledges how difficult it is to form any fair estimate of contemporary work. But, on the whole, his taste was good and sound. He admired Turner and Constable at a time when they were not so much thought of as they are now, and saw that for the highest landscape art we require more than "mere industry and accurate transcription." Of Crome's "Heath Scene near Norwich" he remarks that it shows "how much a subtle observation of the elements, in their wild moods, does for a

most uninteresting flat," and of the popular type of landscape of his day he says that it is "simply an enumeration of hill and dale, stumps of trees, shrubs, water, meadows, cottages, and houses; little more than topography, a kind of pictorial mapwork; in which rainbows, showers, mists, haloes, large beams shooting through rifted clouds, storms, starlight, all the most valued materials of the real painter, are not." He had a thorough dislike of what is obvious or commonplace in art, and while he was charmed to entertain Wilkie at dinner, he cared as little for Sir David's pictures as he did for Mr. Crabbe's poems. With the imitative and realistic tendencies of his day he had no sympathy, and he tells us frankly that his great admiration for Fuseli was largely due to the fact that the little Swiss did not consider it necessary that an arist should only paint what he sees. The qualities that he sought for in a picture were composition, beauty and dignity of line, richness of colour, and imaginative power. Upon the other hand, he was not a doctrinaire. "I hold that no work of art can be tried otherwise than by laws deduced from itself: whether or not it be consistent with itself is the question." This is one of his excellent aphorisms. And in criticising painters so different as Landseer and Martin, Stothard and Etty, he shows that, to use a phrase now classical, he is trying "to see the object as in itself it really is."

However, as I pointed out before, he never feels quite at his ease in his criticisms of contemporary work. "The present," he says, "is about as agreeable a confusion to me as Ariosto on the first perusal. . . . Modern things dazzle me. I must look at them through Time's telescope. Elia complains that to him the merit of a MS. poem is uncertain; 'print,' as he excellently says, 'settles it.' Fifty years' toning does the same thing to a picture." He is happier when he is writing about Watteau and Lancret, about Rubens and Giorgione, about Rembrandt, Correggio, and Michael Angelo; happiest of all when he is writing about Greek things. What is Gothic touched him very little, but classical art and the art of the Renaissance were always dear to him. He saw what our English school could gain from a study of Greek models, and never wearies of pointing out to the young student the artistic possibilities that lie dormant in Hellenic marbles and Hellenic methods of work. In his judgments on the great Italian Masters, says de Quincey, "There seemed a tone of sincerity and of native sensibility, as in one who spoke for himself, and was not merely a copier from books." The highest praise that we can give to him is that he tried to revive style as a conscious tradition. But he saw that no amount of art lectures or art congresses, or "plans for advancing the fine arts," will ever produce this result. The people, he says very wisely, and in the true spirit of Toynbee Hall, must always have "the best models constantly before their eyes."

As is to be expected from one who was a painter, he is often extremely technical in his art criticisms. Of Tintoret's "St. George delivering the Egyptian Princess from the Dragon" he remarks:—

"The robe of Sabra, warmly glazed with Prussian blue, is relieved from the pale greenish background by a vermi-

lion scarf; and the full hues of both are beautifully echoed, as it were, in a lower key by the purple-lake coloured stuffs and bluish iron armour of the saint, besides an ample balance to the vivid azure drapery on the foreground in the indigo shades of the wild wood surrounding the castle."

And elsewhere he talks learnedly of "a delicate Schiavone, various as a tulip bed, with rich broken tints," of "a glowing portrait, remarkable for *morbidezza*, by the scarce Moroni," and of another picture being "pulpy in the carnations."

But, as a rule, he deals with his impressions of the work as an artistic whole, and tries to translate those impressions into words, to give, as it were, the literary equivalent for the imaginative and mental effect. He was one of the first to develop what has been called the art-literature of the nineteenth century, that form of literature which has found in Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Browning its two most perfect exponents. His description of Lancret's *Repas Italien*, in which "a dark haired girl, 'amorous of mischief,' lies on the daisy-powdered grass," is in some respects very charming. Here is his account of "The Crucifixion," by Rembrandt. It is extremely characteristic of his style:

"Darkness—sooty, portentous darkness—shrouds the whole scene: only above the accursed wood, as if through a horrid rift in the murky ceiling, a rainy deluge—'sleety-flaw, discoloured water'—streams down amain, spreading a grisly, spectral light, even more horrible than that palpable night. Already the Earth pants thick and fast! the darkened Cross trembles! the winds are dropt—the air is stagnant—a muttering rumble growls underneath their feet, and some of that miserable crowd begin to fly down the hill. The horses snuff the coming terror, and become unmanageable through fear. The moment rapidly approaches when, nearly torn asunder by His own weight, fainting with loss of blood, which now runs in narrow rivulets from His slit veins, His temples and breast drowned in sweat, and His black tongue parched with the fiery death-fever, Jesus cries, 'I thirst.' The deadly vinegar is elevated to Him.

"His head sinks, and the sacred corpse 'swings senseless of the cross.' A sheet of vermilion flame shoots sheer through the air and vanishes; the rocks of Carmel and Lebanon cleave asunder; the sea rolls on high from the sands its black, weltering waves. Earth yawns, and the graves give up their dwellers. The dead and the living are mingled together in unnatural conjunction and hurry through the holy city. New prodigies await them there. The veil of the temple—the unpierceable veil—is rent asunder from top to bottom, and that dreaded recess containing the Hebrew mysteries—the fatal ark with the tables and seven-branched candelabrum—is disclosed by the light of unearthly flames to the God-deserted multitude.

"Rembrandt never *painted* this sketch, and he was quite right. It would have lost nearly all its charms in losing that perplexing veil of indistinctness which affords such ample range wherein the doubting imagination may speculate. At present it is like a thing in another world. A dark gulf is betwixt us. It is not tangible by the body. We can only approach it in the spirit."

In this passage, written, the author tells us, "in awe and reverence," there is much that is terrible, and very much

that is quite horrible, but it is not without a certain crude form of power, or, at any rate, a certain crude violence of words, a quality which this age should highly appreciate, as it is its chief defect. It is pleasanter, however, to pass to this description of Giulio Romano's "Cephalus and Procris":—

"We should read Moschus's lament for Bion, the sweet shepherd, before looking at this picture, or study the picture as a preparation for the lament. We have nearly the same images in both. For either victim the high groves and forest dells murmur; the flowers exhale sad perfume from their buds; the nightingale mourns on the craggy lands, and the swallow in the long-winding vales; 'the satyrs, too, and fauns dark-veiled groan,' and the fountain nymphs within the wood melt into tearful waters. The sheep and goats leave their pasture; and oreads, 'who love to scale the most inaccessible tops of all uprightest rocks,' hurry down from the song of their wind-courting pines; while the dryads bend from the branches of the meeting trees, and the rivers moan for white Procris, 'with many-sobbing streams,'

'Filling the far-seen ocean with a voice.'

The golden bees are silent on the thymy Hymettus; and the knelling horn of Aurora's love no more shall scatter away the cold twilight on the top of Hymettus. The foreground of our subject is a grassy, sunburnt bank, broken into swells and hollows like waves (a sort of land-breakers), rendered more uneven by many foot-tripping roots and stumps of trees stocked untimely by the axe, which are again throwing out light green shoots. This bank rises rather suddenly on the right to a clustering grove, penetrable to no star, at the entrance of which sits the stunned Thessalian king, holding between his knees that ivory-bright body which was, but an instant agone, parting the rough boughs with her smooth forehead, and treading alike on thorns and flowers with jealousy-stung foot—now helpless, heavy, void of all motion, save when the breeze lifts her thick hair in mockery.

"From between the closely-neighboured boles astonished nymphs press forward with loud cries—

'And deerskin-vested satyrs, crowned
with ivy twists, advance;
And put strange pity in their horned
countenance.'

"Laelaps lies beneath, and shows by his panting the rapid pace of death. On the other side of the group, Virtuous Love with 'vans dejected' holds forth the arrow to an approaching troop of sylvan people, fauns, rams, goats, satyrs, and satyr-mothers, pressing their children tighter with their fearful hands, who hurry along from the left in a sunken path between the foreground and a rocky wall, on whose lowest ridge a brook-guardian pours from her urn her grief-telling waters. Above, and more remote than the Ephidryad, another female, rending her locks, appears among the vine-festooned pillars of an unshorn grove. The centre of the picture is filled by shady meadows, sinking down to a river-mouth; beyond is 'the vast strength of the ocean stream,' from whose floor the extinguisher of stars, rosy Aurora, drives furiously up her

brine-washed steeds to behold the death-pangs of her rival."

Were this description carefully re-written, it would be quite admirable. The conception of making a prose-poem out of paint is excellent. Much of the best modern literature springs from the same aim. In a very ugly and sensible age, the arts borrow, not from life, but from each other.

His sympathies, too, were wonderfully varied. In everything connected with the stage, for instance, he was always extremely interested, and strongly upheld the necessity for achæological accuracy in costume and scene-painting. "In art," he says in one of his essays, "whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well;" and he points out that once we allow the intrusion of anachronisms, it becomes difficult to say where the line is to be drawn. In literature, again, like Lord Beaconsfield on a famous occasion, he was, "on the side of the angels." He was one of the first to admire Keats and Shelley—"the tremulously sensitive and poetical Shelley," as he calls him. His admiration for Wordsworth was sincere and profound. He thoroughly appreciated William Blake. One of the best copies of the "Songs of Innocence and Experience" that is now in existence was wrought specially for him. He loved Alain Chartier, and Ronsard, and the Elizabethan dramatists, and Chaucer and Chapman, and Petrarch. And to him all the arts were one. "Art critics," he remarks with much wisdom, "seem hardly aware of the identity of the primal seeds of poetry and painting, nor that any true advancement in the serious study of one art cogenerates a proportionate perfection in the other;" and he says elsewhere that if a man who does not admire Michael Angelo talks of his love for Milton, he is deceiving either himself or his listeners. To his fellow-contributors in the *London Magazine* he was always most generous, and praises Barry Cornwall, Allan Cunningham, Hazlitt, Elton, and Leigh Hunt without anything of the malice of a friend. Some of his sketches of Charles Lamb are admirable in their way, and, with the art of the true comedian, borrow their style from their subject:—

"What can I say of thee more than all know? that thou hadst the gaiety of a boy with the knowledge of a man: as gentle a heart as ever sent tears to the eyes.

"How wittily would he mistake your meaning, and put in a conceit most seasonably out of season. His talk, without affectation, was compressed, like his beloved Elizabethans, even unto obscurity. Like grains of fine gold, his sentences would beat out into whole sheets. He had small mercy on spurious fame, and a caustic observation on the *fashion for men of genius* was a standing dish. Sir Thomas Browne was a 'bosom cronie' of his; so was Burton, and old Fuller. In his amorous vein he dallied with that peerless Duchess of many-folio odour; and with the hey-day comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher he induced light dreams. He would deliver critical touches on these, like one inspired, but it was good to let him choose his own game; if another began even on the acknowledged pets he was liable to interrupt, or rather append, in a mode difficult to define whether as misapprehensive or

mischievous. One night at C———'s, the above dramatic partners were the temporary subject of chat. Mr. X. commended the passion and haughty style of a tragedy (I don't know which of them), but was instantly taken up by Elia, who told him '*That* was nothing; the lyrics were the high things—the lyrics!'"

One side of his literary career deserves special notice. Modern journalism may be said to owe almost as much to him as to any man of the early part of this century. He was the pioneer of Asiatic prose, and delighted in pictorial epithets and pompous exaggerations. To have a style so gorgeous that it conceals the subject is one of the highest achievements of an important and much admired school of Fleet Street leader-writers, and this school *Janus Weathercock* may be said to have invented. He also saw that it was quite easy by continued reiteration to make the public interested in his own personality, and in his purely journalistic articles this extraordinary young man tells the world what he had for dinner, where he gets his clothes, what wines he likes, and in what state of health he is, just as if he were writing weekly notes for some popular newspaper of our own time. This being the least valuable side of his work, is the one that has had the most obvious influence. A publicist, nowadays, is a man who bores the community with the details of the illegalities of his private life.

Like most artificial people he had a great love of nature. "I hold three things in high estimation," he says somewhere: "to sit lazily on an eminence that commands a rich prospect; to be shadowed by thick trees while the sun shines around me; and to enjoy solitude with the consciousness of neighbourhood. The country gives them all to me." He writes about his wandering over fragrant furze and heath repeating Collins's "Ode to Evening," just to catch the fine quality of the moment; about smothering his face "in a watery bed of cowslips, wet with May dews"; and about the pleasure of seeing the sweet-breathed kine "pass slowly homeward through the twilight," and hearing "the distant clank of the sheep-bell." One phrase of his, "the polyanthus glowed in its cold bed of earth, like a solitary picture of Giorgione on a dark oaken panel," is curiously characteristic of his temperament, and this passage is rather pretty in its way—

"The short, tender grass was covered with marguerites—'such that men called *daisies* in our town'— thick as stars on a summer's night. The harsh caw of the busy rooks came, pleasantly mellowed, from a high, dusky grove of elms at some distance off, and at intervals was heard the voice of a boy scaring away the birds from the newly-sown seeds. The blue depths were the colour of the darkest ultramarine; not a cloud streaked the calm æther; only round the horizon's edge streamed a light, warm film of misty vapour, against which the near village, with its ancient stone church, showed sharply out with blinding whiteness. I thought of Wordsworth's 'Lines written in March.'"

However, we must not forget that the cultivated young man who penned these lines, and who was so susceptible to Wordsworthian influences, was also, as I said at the beginning of this mem-

oir, one of the most subtle and secret poisoners of this or any age. How he first became fascinated by this strange sin he does not tell us, and the diary in which he carefully noted the results of his terrible experiments and the methods that he adopted, has unfortunately been lost to us. Even in later days, too, he was always reticent on the matter, and preferred to speak about "The Excursion," and the "Poems founded on the Affectations." There is no doubt, however, that the poison that he used was strychnine. In one of the beautiful rings of which he was so proud, and which served to show off the fine modelling of his delicate ivory hands, he used to carry crystals of the Indian *nux vomica,* a poison, one of his biographers tells us, "nearly tasteless, difficult of discovery, and capable of almost infinite dilution." His murders, says De Quincey, were more than were ever made known judicially. This is no doubt so, and some of them are worthy of mention. His first victim was his uncle, Mr. Thomas Griffiths. He poisoned him in 1829 to gain possession of Linden House, a place to which he had always been very much attached. In the August of the next year he poisoned Mrs. Abercrombie, his wife's mother, and in the following December he poisoned the lovely Helen Abercrombie, his sister-in-law. Why he murdered Mrs. Abercrombie is not ascertained. It may have been for a caprice, or to quicken some hideous sense of power that was in him, or because she suspected something, or for no reason. But the murder of Helen Abercrombie was carried out by himself and his wife for the sake of a sum of about 18,000*l.* for which they had insured her life in various offices. The circumstances were as follows. On the 12th of December, he and his wife and child came up to London from Linden House, and took lodgings at No. 12, Conduit Street, Regent Street. With them were the two sisters, Helen and Madeleine Abercrombie. On the evening of the 14th they all went to the play, and at supper that night Helen sickened. The next day she was extremely ill, and Dr. Locock, of Hanover Square, was called in to attend her. She lived till Monday, the 20th, when, after the doctor's morning visit, Mr. and Mrs. Wainewright brought her some poisoned jelly, and then went out for a walk When they returned Helen Abercrombie was dead. She was about twenty years of age, a tall, graceful girl with fair hair. A very charming red-chalk drawing of her by her brother-in-law is still in existence, and shows how much his style as an artist was influenced by Sir Thomas Lawrence, a painter for whose work he had always entertained a great admiration. De Quincey says that Mrs. Wainewright was not really privy to the murder. Let us hope that she was not. Sin should be solitary, and have no accomplices.

The insurance companies, suspecting the real facts of the case, declined to pay the policy on the technical ground of misrepresentation and want of interest, and, with curious courage, the poisoner entered an action in the Court of Chancery against the Imperial, it being agreed that one decision should govern all the cases. The trial, however, did not come on for five years, when, after one disagreement, a verdict was ultimately given in the compan-

ies' favour. The judge on the occasion was Lord Abinger. *Egomet Bonmot* was represented by Mr. Erle and Sir William Follet, and the Attorney-General and Sir Frederick Pollock appeared for the other side. The plaintiff, unfortunately, was unable to be present at either of the trials. The refusal of the companies to give him the 18,000*l*. had placed him in a position of most painful pecuniary embarrassment. Indeed, a few months after the murder of Helen Abercrombie, he had been actually arrested for debt in the streets of London while he was serenading the pretty daughter of one of his friends. This difficulty was got over at the time, but shortly afterwards he thought it better to go abroad till he could come to some practical arrangement with his creditors. He accordingly went to Boulogne on a visit to the father of the young lady in question, and while he was there induced him to insure his life with the Pelican Company for 3000*l*. As soon as the necessary formalities had been gone through and the policy executed, he dropped some crystals of strychnine into his coffee as they sat together one evening after dinner. He himself did not gain any monetary advantage by doing this. His aim was simply to revenge himself on the first office that had refused to pay him the price of his sin. His friend died the next day in his presence, and he left Boulogne at once for a sketching tour through the most picturesque parts of Brittany, and was for some time the guest of an old French gentleman, who had a beautiful country house at St. Omer. From this he moved to Paris, where he remained for several years, living in luxury, some say, while others talk of his "skulking with poison in his pocket, and being dreaded by all who knew him." In 1837 he returned to England privately. Some strange mad fascination brought him back. He followed a woman whom he loved.

It was the month of June, and he was staying at one of the hotels in Covent Garden. His sitting-room was on the ground floor, and he prudently kept the blinds down for fear of being seen. Thirteen years before, when he was making his fine collection of majolicas and Marc Antonios, he had forged the names of his trustees to a power of attorney, which enabled him to get possession of some of the money which he had inherited from his mother, and had brought into marriage settlement. He knew that this forgery had been discovered, and that by returning to England he was imperilling his life. Yet he returned. Should one wonder? It was said that the woman was very beautiful. Besides, she did not love him.

It was by mere accident that he was discovered. A noise in the street attracted his attention and, in his artistic interest in modern life, he pushed aside the blind for a moment. Some one outside called out "That's Wainewright, the Bank-forger." It was Forrester, the Bow Street runner.

On the 5th of July he was brought up at the Old Bailey. The following report of the proceedings appeared in the *Times*:—

"Before Mr. Justice Vaughan and Mr. Baron Alderson, Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, aged forty-two, a man of gentlemanly appearance, wearing musta-

chios, was indicted for forging and uttering a certain power of attorney for 2259*l.*, with intent to defraud the Governor and Company of the Bank of England.

"There were five indictments against the prisoner, to all of which he pleaded not guilty, when he was arraigned before Mr. Serjeant Arabin in the course of the morning. On being brought before the judges, however, he begged to be allowed to withdraw the former plea, and then pleaded guilty to two of the indictments which were not of a capital nature.

"The counsel for the Bank having explained that there were three other indictments, but that the Bank did not desire to shed blood, the plea of guilty on the two minor charges was recorded, and the prisoner, at the close of the session, sentenced by the Recorder to transportation for life."

He was taken back to Newgate, preparatory to his removal to the colonies. In a fanciful passage in one of his early essays he had fancied himself "lying in Horsemonger Gaol under sentence of death" for having been unable to resist the temptation of stealing some Marc Antonios from the British Museum in order to complete his collection. The sentence now passed on him was to a man of his culture a form of death. He complained bitterly of it to his friends, and pointed out, with a good deal of reason, some people may fancy, that the money was practically his own, having come to him from his mother, and that the forgery, such as it was, had been committed thirteen years before, which, to use his own phrase, was at least a *circonstance attenuante*. The permanence of personality is a very subtle metaphysical problem, and certainly the English law solves the question in an extremely rough and ready manner. There is, however, something dramatic in the fact that this heavy punishment was inflicted on him for what, if we remember his fatal influence on the prose of modern journalism, was certainly not the worst of all of his sins.

While he was in gaol, Dickens, Macready, and Hablot Browne came across him by chance. They had been going over the prisons of London, searching for artistic effects, and in Newgate they suddenly caught sight of Wainewright. He met them with a defiant stare, Forster tells us, but Macready was "horrified to recognise a man familiarly known to him in former years, and at whose table he had dined."

Others had more curiosity, and his cell was for some time a kind of fashionable lounge. Many men of letters went down to visit their old literary comrade. But he was no longer the kind light-hearted Janus whom Charles Lamb admired. He seems to have grown quite cynical.

To the agent of an insurance company who was visiting him one afternoon, and thought he would improve the occasion by pointing out that, after all, crime was a bad speculation, he replied: "Sir, you City men enter on your speculations and take the chances of them. Some of your speculations succeed, some fail. Mine happen to have failed, yours happen to have succeeded. That is the only difference, sir, between my visitor and me. But, sir, I will tell you one thing in which I have succeeded to the last. I have been determined through life to hold the position of a gentle-

man. I have always done so. I do so still. It is the custom of this place that each of the inmates of a cell shall take his morning's turn of sweeping it out. I occupy a cell with a bricklayer and a sweep, but they never offer me the broom!" When a friend reproached him with the murder of Helen Abercrombie he shrugged his shoulders and said, "Yes; it was a dreadful thing to do, but she had very thick ankles."

From Newgate he was brought to the hulks of Portsmouth, and sent from there in the *Susan* to Van Diemen's Land along with three hundred other convicts. The voyage seems to have been most distasteful to him, and in a letter written to a friend he spoke bitterly about the ignominy of "the companion of poets and artists" being compelled to associate with "country bumpkins." The phrase that he applies to his companions need not surprise us. Crime in England is rarely the result of sin. It is nearly always the result of starvation. There was probably no one on board in whom he would have found a sympathetic listener, or even a psychologically interesting nature.

His love of art, however, never deserted him. At Hobart Town he started a studio, and returned to sketching and portrait-painting, and his conversation and manners seem not to have lost their charm. Nor did he give up his habit of poisoning, and there are two cases on record in which he tried to make away with people who had offended him. But his hand seems to have lost its cunning. Both of his attempts were complete failures, and in 1844, being thoroughly dissatisfied with Tasmanian society, he presented a memorial to the governor of the settlement, Sir John Eardley Wilmot, praying for a ticket-of-leave. In it he speaks of himself as being "tormented by ideas struggling for outward form and realisation, barred up from increase of knowledge, and deprived of the exercise of profitable or even of decorous speech." His request, however, was refused, and the associate of Coleridge consoled himself by making those marvellous *Paradis Artificiels* whose secret is only known to the eaters of opium. In 1852 he died of apoplexy, his sole living companion being a cat, for which he had evinced an extraordinary affection.

His crimes seem to have had an important effect upon his art. They gave a strong personality to his style, a quality that his early work certainly lacked. In a note to the Life of Dickens, Forster mentions that in 1847 Lady Blessington received from her brother, Major Power, who held a military appointment at Hobart Town, an oil portrait of a young lady from his clever brush; and it is said that "he contrived to put the expression of his own wickedness into the portrait of a nice, kind hearted girl." M. Zola, in one of his novels, tells us of a young man who, having committed a murder, takes to art, and paints greenish impressionist portraits of perfectly respectable people, all of which bear a curious resemblance to his victim. The development of Mr. Wainewright's style seems to me far more subtle and suggestive. One can fancy an intense personality being created out of sin.

This strange and fascinating figure that for a few years dazzled literary London, and made so brilliant a *début* in life and letters, is undoubtedly a most interesting study. Mr. W. Carew Hazlitt, his latest biographer, to whom

I am indebted for many of the facts contained in this memoir, and whose little book is, indeed, quite invaluable in its way, is of opinion that his love of art and nature was a mere pretence and assumption, and others have denied to him all literary power. This seems to me a shallow, or at least a mistaken, view. The fact of a man being a prisoner is nothing against his prose. The domestic virtues are not the true basis of art, though they may serve as an excellent advertisement for second-rate artists. It is possible that De Quincey exaggerated his critical powers, and I cannot help saying again that there is much in his published works that is too familiar, too common, too journalistic, in the bad sense of that bad word. Here and there he is distinctly vulgar in expression, and he is always lacking in the self-restraint of the true artist. But for some of his faults we must blame the time in which he lived, and, after all, prose that Charles Lamb thought "capital" has no small historic interest. That he had a sincere love of art and nature seems to me quite certain. There is no essential incongruity between crime and culture. We cannot re-write the whole of history for the purpose of gratifying our moral sense of what should be.

Of course, he is far too close to our own time for us to be able to form any purely artistic judgment about him. It is impossible not to feel a strong prejudice against a man who might have poisoned Lord Tennyson, or Mr. Gladstone, or the Master of Balliol. But had the man worn a costume and spoken a language different from our own, had he lived in imperial Rome, or at the time of the Italian Renaissance, or in Spain in the seventeenth century, or in any land or any century but this century and this land, we would be quite able to arrive at a perfectly unprejudiced estimate of his position and value. I know that there are many historians, or at least writers on historical subjects, who still think it necessary to apply moral judgments to history, and who distribute their praise or blame with the solemn complacency of a successful schoolmaster. This, however, is a foolish habit, and merely shows that the moral instinct can be brought to such a pitch of perfection that it will make its appearance wherever it is not required. Nobody with the true historical sense ever dreams of blaming Nero, or scolding Tiberius or censuring Cæsar Borgia. These personages have become like the puppets of a play. They may fill us with terror, or horror, or wonder, but they do not harm us. They are not in immediate relation to us. We have nothing to fear from them. They have passed into the sphere of art and science, and neither art nor science knows anything of moral approval or disapproval. And so it may be some day with Charles Lamb's friend. At present I feel that he is just a little too modern to be treated in that fine spirit of disinterested curiosity to which we owe so many charming studies of the great criminals of the Italian Renaissance from the pens of Mr. John Addington Symonds, Miss A. Mary F. Robinson, Miss Vernon Lee, and other distinguished writers. However, Art has not forgotten him. He is the hero of Dicken's *Hunted Down,* the Varney

of Bulwer's *Lucretia;* and it is gratifying to note that fiction has paid some homage to one who was so powerful with "pen, pencil, and poison." To be suggestive for fiction is to be of more importance than a fact.

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